

quæ amarula nostra degustatio fa-
 cta est: unica in perferendo cruciatu ani-
 æquitate ac lenitate. Si osculo proda-
 , coarguit quidem, sed non percutit: si
 cito corripitur, ita exprobrat, ut tamen
 quatur: si zelo inflammatus Malchi au-
 n gladio præcide
 e loco suo refti
 ctus profugiat,
 domiticum adve
 ur, poposceris,
 : filatironem ob
 n acceperit, eun
 radifum introdu
 risti benigna on
 risti passiones: q
 ad majus ac præf
 us mortem ipia
 tulerit, nos con
 fas & injurias a
 nus? Quin hæc c
 n, atque etiam n
 i videte) de quil
 be differui. Hi de
 n hi templa, no
 quod viva vive
 tinæ vivæ, holo

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 Hi fauste nunciat pastor ille bonus: - oh

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH



THE POEMS OF PRUDENTIUS
 VOLUME II

Translated by
 Sister M. Clement Eagan, C.C.V.I.

δι' ὧν τ' πικρὰν ρεῦσιν ἐφέραπεν. ἡ
 τῆς ἐν τῷ πάθῃ μακροθυμίας ἀν
 τι προδοθῇ. ἐλέγχει μὲν, ὅπλῃ
 ἄφνω συλληφθῇ, ὀνειδίζει μὲν, ἐπεὶ
 μαχαίρα Μάλχῃ τέμνης τὸ ὠτί

ἀποκαλασθῇ
 ρισελῇ καὶ
 τὰς ἀγῶνας, καὶ
 διὰ κακίαν κ
 εἰσάξῃ διὰ
 λανθρώπῃ, καὶ
 ὅτι παθημάτων
 Θεῷ καὶ θανάτῳ
 ὁμοίοις μηδὲ
 τὸς δὲ καὶ τ
 ὅμαι, καὶ σκο
 ἢ πολλάκις
 τοι τὰς οἰκίας
 , ἡμεῖς τὸν Θε
 ὦν καὶ ζῶν
 μαλα λογικὰ
 ἀδὲ προσ

ἔτοι δῆμους, ἡμεῖς ἀγγέλους ἔτοι
 πῶσιν ἡμεῖς ἔτοι τὸ ἀπειλῆν, ἡμ
 εὐχεσθαι ἔτοι τὸ βάλλειν, ἡμεῖς
 ἔτοι χρυσὸν καὶ ἄργυρον, ἡμεῖς λ
 θαρμένον. ἐποίησας σεαυτῷ διώρο
 ροφα; γινώσκει τὰ ῥήματα τῆ γραφ
 πισὸν, διεσπασμένον θυρίσιν, ἀλλ' ἐ
 τῆ ἐμῆς πίστεως ὑψηλότερα καὶ τῆ
 ἔς Φέρομαι. μικρὸν μοι τὸ ποίμν
 ἐπὶ κρημνῶν Φερόμενον. σενή μο
 πλὴν λύκοις ἀνεπίδατ, πλ
 δεχομένη λησὴν, ὅδε ὑπερβαινομένη
 καὶ ξένοις. ὅψομαι ταύτην εὐοιδ
 τυτέραν, πολλὰς καὶ τῶν νυνὶ λύ
 εἰς τὴν εὐαγγελίαν, με δεῖ τυχόν κ
 τὸτο εὐαγγελίζεται μοι ὁ ποιμ

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

A NEW TRANSLATION

VOLUME 52

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A NEW TRANSLATION

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VOLUME 2

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THE POEMS OF PRUDENTIUS

VOLUME 2

APOLOGETIC AND DIDACTIC POEMS

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INTRODUCTION

THIS IS THE SECOND of the two volumes into which the present translation of the poems of Prudentius has been divided, as was indicated in the Introduction to Volume 1. The previous volume, Volume 43 of this Series, contained the two books of hymns: the *Liber Cathemerinon*, 'Book of Hymns for Every Day,' and the *Liber Peristephanon*, 'Book of the Martyrs' Crowns.' These lyric poems are written in a variety of Latin classical meters.

The present volume contains the didactic and apologetic works of Prudentius, the *Apotheosis*, *Hamartigenia*, *Psychomachia*, and *Contra Symmachum*, all long poems written in dactylic hexameters and preceded by lyrical prefaces; the *Tituli historiarum* or *Dittochaeon* consisting of forty-nine hexameter quatrains; and the *Epilogue*.

In the *Apotheosis*, a poem of 1084 hexameters, Prudentius refutes the early heretics of the Church who denied the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. The *Hamartigenia*, or 'Origin of Sin,' is a refutation of the heretic Marcion who taught that there were two Gods, one the author of evil and the other the author of good. The *Psychomachia* is a long allegorical epic, in which Virtues and Vices contend for mastery in the human soul. In the first book of the *Contra Symmachum*, Prudentius attacks the pagan gods of Rome; in the second, he refutes the arguments of Symmachus for the restoration of the statue of Victory in the Senate House and the recognition of the pagan religion. The first twenty-four quatrains of the *Tituli historiarum* or *Dittochaeon*, 'Scenes from Sacred History or Twofold Nourishment,' deal with episodes from the Old Testament, and the remaining twenty-five are descriptive of scenes from the New Testament. Com-

mentators are of the opinion that these quatrains were intended to serve as inscriptions for pictures or mosaics in a church. The *Epilogue*, in which the poet humbly offers his works to God, concludes this second volume.

The long apologetic poems in this volume have been translated into blank verse, the best English medium for rendering the Latin dactylic hexameter. As in the translation of the hymns of the first volume, the lyrical prefaces have been rendered in the English accentual equivalents of the various classical meters. The text used is that of Bergman, Volume 61, of the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

(APOTHEOSIS)

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

A Hymn on The Trinity

Trinity highest is God, three in person and one in His essence;
Wisdom born of the Father's heart is His Son and beloved,
And the Spirit all Holy proceeds from that fountain eternal.
Neither older in time is the Father, nor greater in Godhead,
For from Himself the eternal God all-knowing engendered 5
That Divine Word through whom all created things have
their being.¹

While to beget the Word is alone the work of the Father,
To the Word it belongs to save man by assuming his nature,
To make amends for him to the Father and bring him to
heaven.

This is the role of the Spirit of God, who Himself is true
Godhead: 10

Ever ready to pour out His gifts on the souls of the faithful,
He applies to their hearts the graces of Christ and the Father.

Preface

Is our religion true? Thee, Master, I consult.

Do we unswerving faith maintain,

Or do we, heedless of the bane of teachings false,

Lapse into error unawares?

Amid the winding paths salvation's narrow way¹ 5

Can scarce be traced with certainty,

¹ Cf. John 1.3.

¹ Cf. Matt. 7.14.

So many crossroads loom before us, trodden smooth
 By wanderers straying from the faith,
 And hidden bypaths are encountered on the way
 Where here and there the tracks entwine. 10
 If wandering from the truth man follows these detours
 And leaves the straight and narrow road,
 He soon will fall headlong into the hidden snare
 That enemies have set for him,
 A robber band that falls upon the travelers, 15
 When they pursue a devious way.
 What does the boldness of the human mind not frame?
 What evils does it not desire?
 The nature of Almighty God men dare assail
 With false and quibbling arguments. 20
 They cut the faith to pieces with the subtle cant
 That flows from their malicious tongues.
 They settle and unravel every knotty point
 By labyrinthine sophistries.
 Woe to these hypocrites and their deceitful wiles! 25
 Woe to their cunning trickery!
 True faith, the foe to these misleading disputants,
 Asunder rends the hardest knot.
 God has expressly chosen foolish things of earth
 To vanquish and confound the wise,² 30
 And by the weak things He has overcome the strong
 To make it easy to believe.
 Behold a stone is set for us, a stumbling block,³
 Against which vanity may strike,
 A sign unto the faithful, scandal to the lax, 35
 The one it fells, the other guides.
 The blind man feels his way with slow uncertain step
 And runs into what'er he meets.

² Cf. 1 Cor. 1.27.

³ Cf. 1 Peter 2.7,8.

The lamp of faith alone must shine before our feet,⁴
 That footsteps may unswerving be. 40
 The foe assails and carries off the wanderers
 Who in the darkness go astray,
 A demon who devours the wheat spread on the way
 For pilgrims passing to and fro,
 A thief who tampers with the fertile fields of Christ 45
 By sowing in them barren oats.⁵
 The husbandman allows these, fed by poison sap,
 To grow into the ripened plant,
 Lest he, perchance, by rooting up the useless tares
 Should kill the stalk that bears the grain.⁶ 50
 He waits, therefore, until the glowing harvest time
 When both the good and bad are ripe,
 That what his fan has winnowed may be stored in barns,
 And chaff with fire may be consumed.⁷
 Yet it behooves all men to understand the seed 55
 Of tares that choke the golden crop.

Of countless errors, few my song shall treat
 Lest naming them, I stain my faithful tongue.
 One banishing the Father from His throne,¹
 Clothes Him in narrow human frame,² nor fears
 To make Him die, nailed to the bitter tree.³ 5
 Can Godhead suffer, God whose form and shape
 Was never seen, for thought or eye or hand

4 Cf. Ps. 118.105

5 Cf. Matt. 13.25.

6 Cf. Matt. 13.29,30.

7 Cf. Matt. 3.12.

1 Cf. Claudian, *De bello Gildonico* 409.

2 Cf. Claudian, *In Rufinum* 2.487.

3 The chief proponents of the Trinitarian heresy of the first centuries known as Monarchianism, Patripassianism, or Modalism were Noetus, Praxeas, and Sabellius. They held that there is no distinction of divine Persons in God, but only one Principle, the Father who created the world, became incarnate, and died for men. They considered the Trinity as three modes of being and self-manifestation of the one God, who is the Father insofar as He is the Creator, the Son insofar as He is the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit insofar as He is the Sanctifier.

Has not the power to grasp His majesty?
 We have the sacred word of mighty John,
 Who witness bears that God cannot be seen.⁴ 10
 He is the Father, whom no piercing eye
 With burning glance has ever yet discerned,
 Who put not on the form of man, nor veiled
 His Godhead under human mien or mode.
 Thou must, blasphemer, spurn the book divine, 15
 Or else the Father's might was never seen,
 Which cannot mingle with the things of earth.

And yet the Father's image may be seen,
 Which has appeared at times to human eyes,
 Which our dim sight, though watery and dull, 20
 Has had the power through mist and cloud to reach.
 Who so of men is said to have seen God
 Has seen the Son who is by Him begot;
 The Son proceeding from the Father showed
 Himself to man in forms that he could grasp. 25
 For pure Godhead comes not within our view
 Unless it veils itself in earthly form.
 This Deity did Abraham behold,
 Sire of a noble race and host to Christ,
 Who deigned in threefold shape to visit earth.⁵ 30
 This, too, did Jacob meet with wrestling arms.⁶

The giver of the law divine, himself,
 Who, bidden to approach, stood face to face
 With God and friendly words exchanged with Him,⁷
 Knew that he looked on Christ in fleshly guise. 35
 But bolder then, he revelation sought
 Not granted unto man and hopeless strove
 To see Christ's majesty devoid of flesh.

⁴ Cf. John 1.18; 6.46.

⁵ Cf. Gen. 18.

⁶ Cf. Gen. 32.24.

⁷ Cf. Exod. 33.11

At last, when he had with his present Lord
 Conversed at length in easy fellowship, 40
 He prayed: 'O gracious Lord, let me know Thee.'⁸
 God answered: 'Not myself, but my one Son
 The just shall see.'⁹ Could He have made more clear
 The Word cannot be seen except in earthly form,
 That though the Father man cannot behold, 45
 The Word may when He wills reveal Himself
 To human eyes, and oft assumes the shape
 Of man or angel that He may be seen?
 It was the Word, breathed from the Father's mouth,
 Who of the Virgin took a mortal frame. 50
 The human form that not yet in the flesh
 Appeared to Moses wore a brow like ours,
 Since God, who would by power of the Word
 Assume a body, made the face the same.
 Flames rose and seemed to burn the thorny bush.¹⁰ 55
 God moved amid the branches set with spines,
 And tresses of the flames swayed harmlessly,¹¹
 That He might shadow forth His Son's descent
 Into our thorny members sin infests
 With teeming briers and fills with bitter woes. 60
 For tainted at its root that noxious shrub
 Had sprouted from its baneful sap a crop
 Of evil shoots beset with many thorns.
 The sterile branches suddenly grew bright
 As God enkindled with His mighty power 65
 The leafy boughs, nor harmed the tangled briers.
 He touched the scarlet berries, blood-red fruits,
 And grazed the twigs that grew from deadly wood,
 For stains of sin are washed away by blood
 Shed by the tortured bush with cruel pangs. 70

8 Cf. Exod. 33.13.

9 Cf. Exod. 33.23

10 Cf. Exod. 3.2.

11 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.683.

That seer saw nought but what in flesh was seen,
 God's image bright, God's Word, and God the fire¹²
 That fills the sinful thorn bush of our frame.
 The Source of light and Father of the Word
 Exceeds man's sight, as the apostle shows 75
 When he denies that Godhead can be seen.¹³
 Believe me, no man has seen God, no man.
 God sent from heaven may be seen by man,
 But not Godhead itself; the One begot
 Is visible, not the ingenerate.¹⁴ 80
 The Father's mouth is hid, whence came the Son,
 Who once revealed Himself, assuming shape
 That could the Passion bear, and so required
 A human form. For Being infinite
 Cannot feel pain, since that celestial fire 85
 Stoops not to suffering nor to earthly woes,
 But shining, pure, serene, unlimited,
 And subject to nought else, it rules all things,
 Without beginning, and before all time
 The majesty that with the Father dwelt, 90
 His spirit and thought, the way of His designs,
 Which made not by His hand nor spoken word,
 Breathed from the Father's heart, declared His will.¹⁵

 This, then, no scourges rend nor spittle shames;
 This no affronting hand torments with blows, 95
 Nor sharp and wounding nails fix to a cross.¹⁶
 These racked the human flesh, of Virgin born
 By nature's law, without the marriage bond.
 Man feels the thirst, man drinks the gall and wine
 And shudders at the thought of death and pain.¹⁷ 100

12 Cf. Heb. 1.3; Col. 1.15; 1 John 1.5.

13 Cf. John 1.18; 1 John 4.12.

14 Cf. 1 Tim. 6.16.

15 Cf. Ps. 44.1.

16 Cf. Matt. 26.67; 27.26; John 19.1-3.

17 Cf. Matt. 27.34; 26.38,39.

Tell me, you impious teachers, who declare
 The Heavenly Father left His throne on high
 When God came down into our members frail,
 Did, then, the Father suffer? What deceit
 Does heresy not dare? Was He conceived, 105
 And growing did He swell the Maiden's womb?
 And is the page of Holy Scripture false¹⁸
 Which says the Word came forth in form of flesh?¹⁹
 We firmly hold the Father of the Word
 Was not made flesh. Stand fast, O Sacred Writ; 110
 It suits you not to speak ought false or vague.
 The Father none has seen;²⁰ He never came
 To earth, nor bared His light to human eyes.
 He sent the Word made visible, and when
 He willed, received Him back; the Virgin's womb 115
 He by the Word impressed and formed the Child.

God by His power and spirit dwells on earth,
 And every part the Father's glory fills;
 The Father nowhere absent is, but by
 The Word is ever present; hence did Christ 120
 To Philip say: 'Am I with you so long,
 And you know not the Father seen in Me.'²¹
 To the invisible Father it belongs
 To generate the visible Son, through whom
 The Father can be seen, not by the eyes 125
 Of saints alone, but by the sightless orbs
 Of darkened souls unmindful of the truth.

If you deny God shows Himself to men,
 Tell me whom Babylon's king sees from his throne
 Walk through the flames unharmed and firmly tread 130

18 Cf. Claudian, *Probino et Olybrio* 197.

19 Cf. John 1.14.

20 Cf. John 6.46.

21 Cf. John 14.9.

The greedy fires that touch not brethren three.²²
 Thus speaks the king: 'This panting furnace, lords,
 Received three men into its raging fires,
 And, lo, another smiling parts the flames.
 It is the Son of God. Him I adore.²³ 135
 Remove the brands He scorned, the glowing pine;
 The burning brimstone loses now its heat.
 The Son it is who works these miracles;²⁴
 I see Him, God Himself, true Son of God.²⁵
 He rules the scorching heat, He tames its wrath; 140
 He tramples on the yielding fire, He curbs
 The blazing pitch and quenches rabid flames.²⁶
 The torrid blast roars past the strangers' robes,
 Commanded not to touch the splendid folds.
 Assyrian turbans by the fumes are shunned, 145
 Lest flowing locks be soiled by reeking smoke.'²⁷
 He pauses; then he bids the music cease,
 The sackbuts, trumpets, harps, and flutes.
 False worship ends and festal notes are hushed
 That praised the golden statue he set up.²⁸ 150
 The songs of holy men resounding now
 In triple concord laud the heavenly king
 Who made the sea, the lands and shining stars²⁹
 And saved His children in the midst of flames.

To help mankind the Almighty Father's Word 155
 Came ever to the earth and out of love
 Assumed a human shape, that flesh one day
 To be imbued with the eternal Lord
 But leading then a fallen, carnal life,

22 Cf. Dan. 3.49,50.

23 Cf. Dan. 3.91,92.

24 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 4.441.

25 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.322.

26 Cf. *ibid.* 5.801-802.

27 Cf. *ibid.* 12.588; Dan. 3.94.

28 Cf. Dan. 3.5.

29 Cf. Dan. 3.51-90.

Might to its Master's image be transformed,³⁰ 160
 Might know Him sharer of its earthly countenance
 The pledge revealed of partnership with Him,
 And by degrees draw near its brother Christ.
 Man was but carnal once; the Spirit now
 Has raised him to the state of heaven's child 165
 By filling him with God's life-giving grace.³¹
 A new man now engendered by the Spirit,
 But of our substance, from the Virgin drawn,
 The primitive corruption has put off
 And of Himself put on immortal life; 170
 The Son of Man, but Son of God also,
 Alone He looks upon the Father's face.
 None knows the Father save the Son and him
 To whom the Son, our Savior, makes Him known.³²
 In short, I say, the Father came not down 175
 Into the flesh, but flesh assumed has scaled
 The Father's throne; the Son unites them both.

Yield, rash Sabellius, you who scoff at Christ,
 Dethrone the Father and deny the Son.
 Do you not wrong the Father when you scorn 180
 The Son? No Father He without the Son,³³
 For Him you rob of Son you cannot call
 The Father. But perhaps you wish to take
 From God a father's love, content to name
 Him God, without paternal grace or power. 185

What pagan lying mid a thousand gods,
 Adoring them with salt, incense, and turf,
 Deems not a God supreme rules over all?

³⁰ *exemplo mutaret eri similesque per artus*. This line, which does not appear in the oldest MSS, is bracketed by Bergman, who regards it as an interpolation.

³¹ Cf. 1 Cor. 15.45-47.

³² Cf. Matt. 11.27.

³³ Cf. Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeam* 10.

Though smoking altars he may consecrate
 To Saturn, Juno, her of Cythera,³⁴ 190
 And other monsters, when to heaven he looks,
 All sovereignty to one God he refers,
 To whom these powers diverse their homage yield.
 What tribe so dull of mind or rude of speech,
 What heathen cult so sordid as to place 195
 The dog Anubis³⁵ on the heavenly throne?
 None gives Cloacina³⁶ or Epona³⁷
 A starry seat, though they rank incense pay
 And meal and entrails probe with hands profane.³⁸
 Consult the bearded Plato's wanderings, 200
 Consult the musings of the Cynic foul
 And Aristotle's knotty arguments.
 Though in a maze of dark uncertainty
 These go astray,³⁹ although a hen or cock
 They promise, that the god of medicine 205
 May deign to favor them at death's approach,
 Yet when to norms of reason they conform,
 In all their hazy notions, their disputes
 And wrangling arguments, they voice belief
 In one God by whose power the restless earth 210
 Revolves, and wandering stars maintain their course.
 Man's nature does not suffer him to doubt
 The power supreme, unless he is a brute
 And lifts not eyes to heaven with face erect.⁴⁰
 Nay, even Numa's soothsayer this divined, 215
 And savage Scot, worse than a dog of war.

But we today who twice have seen the Lord,

34 Venus.

35 An Egyptian deity represented with the head of a dog; cf. Propertius 3.11.41.

36 A surname of Venus.

37 A goddess associated with horses; cf. Juvenal 8.157.

38 Cf. Juvenal 6.551.

39 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 5.588-591.

40 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.86.

In Scripture and in flesh, by faith at first,⁴¹
 Then face to face, who when the cross confirmed
 The prophets' words, into His side and hands 220
 Our fingers thrust,⁴² know Jesus as our King;
 And we believe it sinful to deny
 The glorious name of Father to our God,
 Who from Himself brought forth our King,
 King not of Parthian nor of Roman race,⁴³ 225
 But king of worlds above, midway, below,
 Lord of creation, King of the universe.
 The midmost realm of flesh, the Father's heights,
 And Stygian depths He rules. He downward steps
 And to Himself returns, is God and man. 230
 He dies, but still is God. All human toil
 He shares, that He may to the Father bring
 Souls that were dead, and raise the body too.
 What prophets had foretold to sounding lyres,
 We saw and handled, heard His voice and words,⁴⁴ 235
 And now we understand the seers of old
 And prophecies made clear by sight of Christ.

This our salvation is, our life and way,
 Never to name the Father without the Son
 And never to confess the Son as God 240
 Without the Father's name, never invoke
 The Father and Son without the Holy Spirit,
 Yet not to make of them three separate gods
 But understand one God subsists in three.
 The Son is not the Father,⁴⁵ for we know 245
 That of the Unbegot He is true Son
 And Father may not be Son to Himself.
 It is absurd to think that from Himself

41 Cf. Heb. 11.3.

42 Cf. John 20.27.

43 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 4.211.

44 Cf. 1 John 1.1.

45 Cf. Tertullian, *op. cit.* 10.

The Father was begot, as some outgrowth
 Or new material of a sudden birth; 250
 That God brought forth and made Himself this Son.⁴⁶
 The names divine express naught vague or false.
 The Father is the Father by begetting,
 The Son is Son because He is begot.
 Coequal with His Father and supreme, 255
 How can their operation be the same
 Unless the Son has all the Father's might
 And in their essence Father and Son are one?

Some further go and this begetting probe,
 If it is right for human thought to strive 260
 To know this mystery beyond all time,
 Beyond all ages and creation's dawn,
 Which passes all man's wit to comprehend.⁴⁷
 Since origins are difficult to grasp,
 How shall to mortal man the power be given 265
 To know what God did ere the world began,
 How He the Word with no beginning framed?
 This is revealed to us: the Word is God,
 Of Father unbegot one perfect Son
 Without beginning, yet originate, 270
 Eternal with the Father, yet born of Him.
 The Father was not severed in such way
 That part of Him became the Son, nor did
 His substance lengthen, dwarfing His Godhead,
 As a transmuted portion formed the Son.⁴⁸ 275
 God changes not, nor does He from Himself
 Take anything when He begets the Son,
 Who is whole God from whole God, Light from Light.
 But when is light without the light? When does
 A shining light lack radiance, or when 280

⁴⁶ Cf. *ibid.* 10,11

⁴⁷ Cf. Athanasius, *Oratio contra Arianos* 2.36.

⁴⁸ Cf. Hilary, *De Trinitate* 2.22 and 4.4 (Vol. 25, this series).

Does flame diminish flame? When is the Father
 And God and Light not God and Father of Light?⁴⁹
 If once He was not Father and begot
 In time the Son, a new mode He acquired.
 Let us not think God's fullness may increase.⁵⁰ 285
 God and Father, light and glory, He was
 For aye, nor was He Father afterwards.
 Eternal with the Father Christ we hold,
 Begot of Father who no father had.

If, wretch, you doubt the mysteries of Christ's birth, 290
 You are not of the Catholic fellowship,
 But of the incense bearers, worshipers
 Of Deucalions,⁵¹ tombstones, and oiled fig trees.
 Nay, in the fountain of antiquity⁵²
 Seek signs of God, run through the ancient books 295
 Of him⁵³ who did not learn the science of God
 From witless sire or boding patriarch,
 From hoary tale or prating nurse, or cry
 Of noisy crow, but from a gracious God,
 Who taught the trembling mortal face to face,⁵⁴ 300
 Revealing to him all His majesty.
 The inspired historian makes it very clear
 That at earth's dawn the Father not alone
 Nor without Christ His new creation formed.
 'God fashioned man,' he says, 'and gave to him 305
 The face of God.'⁵⁵ What but to say that He
 Was not alone, that God stood by God's side
 When the Lord made man in image of the Lord?

49 Cf. Athanasius, *De decretis Nicenae synod* 23-24; 27; also *Oratio contra Arianos* 2.32.

50 Cf. Hilary, *op. cit.* 3.17 (Vol. 25, this series).

51 Name of several mythological persons, the most important of whom was the son of Prometheus.

52 The Old Testament.

53 Moses, author of the Pentateuch.

54 Cf. Exod. 33.11.

55 Cf. Gen. 1.27.

Christ is the Father's image, we are Christ's;
 God made us in the likeness of the Lord, 310
 For in our likeness Christ would come in time.
 From sacred books, I many texts can cull
 To prove, unless you spurn them,⁵⁶ that Godhead
 Not only in the Father dwells, but Christ
 With Him is God, as Genesis declares:⁵⁷ 315
 'The Lord rained fire from the Lord on the Sodomites.'
 What Lord, and from what Lord, if from His throne
 The Father looks alone, or burns with ire?
 The Lord the Son hurled down the fiery wrath
 Of the Lord the Father; both thunderbolts are one. 320

If listening Jews had so imbibed these truths
 That the dull fibers of their hearts were touched,
 They would have hearkened to the Lord of heaven
 Who had come down to save His wandering sheep,⁵⁸
 But all their earrings had been used to mold 325
 A head for Baal, and ears of gems were robbed.⁵⁹
 From mount of shining light and speech with God
 The leader of the sinful race appears
 And brings to darkened tents the tables graved
 By Hand divine,⁶⁰ but prone the people spurn 330
 Christ written in the symbols of the law.⁶¹
 Unhappy they, who closed their dazzled eyes
 And with enshrouding robes their faces veiled.⁶²
 But we with veil flung back see Christ Himself,
 And with uncovered face we look on God,⁶³ 335
 Nor do we lie prostrate beneath the law

56 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.176.

57 Cf. Gen. 19.24.

58 Cf. Matt. 15.24.

59 Cf. Exod. 32.2-4.

60 Cf. Exod. 32.15,16.

61 Cf. 2 Cor. 3.13,14.

62 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.545. According to Scripture (Exod. 34.33-35), it was Moses who veiled his face rather than the Israelites.

63 Cf. 2 Cor. 3.18.

But view its splendor with uplifted brow.
 Alas for the tree whose boughs were once so fair,
 Alas for the olive branch once rich with fruits!⁶⁴
 Lo with the olive wild engrafted now, 340
 Thy stem clothed with strange bark grows green again.
 Have pity on thyself. This olive shoot
 Boasts not, rejoicing in its foreign stem,
 But warns thee, mindful of thy native stock,
 To sadden not its leaves with bitter oil 345
 Nor envy at thy root its budding crown.⁶⁵
 O ingrates, Christ the Lord thou doest blaspheme!

Whose blood, pray tell us, makes your paschal rite
 So solemn? Say what yearling lamb is slain.⁶⁶
 That lamb is sacred to you every year, 350
 But as a beast. It is absurd to deem
 It holy with the blood of lambs to smear
 The doorposts and to feast on unleavened bread
 With merry song, while sin ferments within.
 Do you not see, dull men, it is our Pasch 355
 You imitate,⁶⁷ and that these old-law rites
 Prefigure all the Passion's Mystery,
 That Passion which the forehead signs with blood
 Upon the dwelling of our body smeared.⁶⁸
 This sign the wild Egyptian tempest flees,⁶⁹ 360
 This shakes the deadly rule of Pharian king,
 This Abraham with all his faithful race
 Saves from the hail that falls on heathen power.⁷⁰
 The son of Abraham upon his brow
 Bears marks of blood and has through faith 365
 Seen God on earth, true God of the Father born.

⁶⁴ Vergil, *Georgics* 2.31 and 81.

⁶⁵ Cf. Rom. 11.17,18.

⁶⁶ Cf. Exod. 12.5,6.

⁶⁷ Cf. 1 Cor. 5.7,8.

⁶⁸ Cf. Exod. 12.7,23.

⁶⁹ Cf. Exod. 10.13.

⁷⁰ Cf. Exod. 9.23-25.

When Abraham saw God, he trusted Him,
 But you, his carnal sons, look on all things
 With carnal eyes and by a spiritual law
 Do works of flesh, for not from heaven came 370
 The fleshly law you heed, but one Christ fills,
 Engendering hope. What hope but light divine,
 The Lord's advent first seen by Abraham
 And promised by the Father to our eyes
 In time to come, by word of the law confirmed? 375
 Not only of the law. What writers now
 Are not intent on Christ, or what bookcase
 Lacks recent tomes that laud Christ's wondrous works?
 The Hebrew pen, the fluent style of Greece,
 And Latin eloquence give praise to Him. 380
 Unwitting, Pilate gave command: 'Go, scribe,
 Write in three tongues what might is crucified,'⁷¹
 A threefold title on the gibbet's head,
 That reading it, Judaea may know God,
 And Greece and golden Rome may worship Him. 385
 The trumpet's blare from hollow horn of brass,
 Sweet hymns the potent breath pours from the heart,
 The vibrant notes of sacred harp and lyre,
 The blended harmonies of organ reeds,
 And songs of shepherds rival glens repeat, 390
 All join in praising Christ, in singing Christ,
 And mute things speak of Christ, moved by these strains.

O Name most sweet, my light and grace and hope,⁷²
 My refuge sure! O certain rest from toil,⁷³
 Sweet savor, fragrant perfume, living spring, 395
 Chaste love, resplendent beauty, true delight.
 If deaf, that race will not incline its ears
 To hear Thy praise, which myriad voices

⁷¹ Cf. John 19.19.20.

⁷² Cf. Horace, *Odes* 1.1.2.

⁷³ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.393.

In all the earth with such great joy announce,
 Then let it listen to the frenzied cries 400
 The fiend pours forth from hearts he has possessed⁷⁴
 And put its faith in them: Apollo writhes,
 Struck by the name of Christ, nor can he bear
 The Word's fierce lightning flash; the lashing tongue⁷⁵
 That lauds Christ's wondrous works torments the wretch. 405
 God's priest intones: 'Fly, crafty serpent, fly!
 Go out of him and loose your hidden coils.
 The man you vex, foul thief, belongs to Christ.
 Have done, Christ present guards his mortal frame!
 You may not seize as prey one joined to Christ. 410
 Away, proud spirit, Christ bids you go from him!
 At this the fierce Cyllenian god laments,
 And Jupiter exhales his well-known fires.
 Behold, a legion hurls headlong the swine
 Of Gerasenes, and once enchained in tombs, 415
 It loudly grunts with pain. From lips possessed
 It had cried out: 'O Jesus, Son of God,
 Offspring of David's royal line, we know
 Who Thou art and why Thou hast come, what power
 Expels us, at Thy coming filled with dread.'⁷⁶ 420

Has not this voice, Judaea, reached your ears?⁷⁷
 True, but it has not pierced your darkened mind
 And, driven back, has from the threshold fled.
 The man where sets the evening sun, and he
 Who first beholds the rosy dawn has heard 425
 Of the Lord's advent. The fervent Gospel word
 Has thawed the Scythian frosts and Hyrcanian snows,
 So that Rhodopeian Hebrus, freed from ice,
 Flows from Caucasian cliffs, a gentler stream.
 The Getans mild have grown; Gelonians now 430

⁷⁴ Cf. Mark 1.23,24.

⁷⁵ Cf. Horace, *Odes* 3.12.3.

⁷⁶ Cf. Mark 5.1-13; Luke 8.26-33.

⁷⁷ Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 3.461-463.

Their bloody thirst allay with cups of milk,
 Henceforth to drink the sacred blood of Christ.⁷⁸
 The realm of Afric Atlas, once infidel,
 At Christian altars crowns its bearded kings.
 Since God, the Spirit, touched a mortal womb, 435
 And with His Mother's flesh God clothed Himself,
 Since from Virginity He was made man,
 The Delphic cave is hushed, its omens damned,
 The tripod boding nought, and panting priest
 No fates from Sibylline pages hissing forth; 440
 False Dodona has lost its raging fumes,
 Dumb Cumae mourns its oracles, now dead,
 And from Libyan deserts Ammon speaks no more.
 The Roman capitol mourns to see its chiefs
 Own Christ as God and her temples fall 445
 At their command. Aeneas' royal heir
 Kneels as a suppliant in the house of Christ
 And venerates the standard of the cross.

Yet in my youth there was an emperor,⁷⁹
 As I remember well, one brave in war, 450
 A wise lawgiver, famed in word and deed,
 Who held our country dear but not our faith,
 For he adored at shrines of many gods.
 Unfaithful to God, though faithful to the world,
 Before Minerva's throne he bent his head, 455
 A plaster Juno's sandals kissed, at the feet
 Of Hercules he knelt, Diana's knees
 He smeared with wax, and at Apollo's shrine
 He crouched or entrails burned to Pollux's horse.⁸⁰
 Once he was offering bloody sacrifice 460
 To Hecate; the cattle stood in line
 Awaiting the pontiff's ax, and somber wreaths

⁷⁸ Allusion to the Eucharist.

⁷⁹ Julian the Apostate (361-363).

⁸⁰ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.254.

Of cypress round the heifers' horns were twined.
 And now the aged priest with chaplet crowned
 Had thrust his knife into a victim's breast, 465
 And as with bloody hands the veins he held
 And the pulse was counting with augural skill
 Until the heart, still warm, would cease to beat,
 He suddenly grew pale and cried aloud:
 'What do I here? A greater power, O King, 470
 I know not what, has marred our sacrifice,
 Greater than bowls of foaming milk can bear,⁸¹
 Or blood of cattle slain and herbs and crowns.
 I see the shades I summoned scattered far;
 Persephone affrighted turns away⁸² 475
 And flees with torch put out and scourge withdrawn.
 No cryptic murmur, no Thessalian charm,
 Nor victim can recall the banished spirits.
 Do you not see the flames in censers droop,
 And embers slowly turn to ashen gray? 480
 The royal servant cannot hold the cup,
 And balsams trickle from his feeble hand;
 The bays slip from the startled flamen's head,
 The victim thwarts the aim of wavering steel.
 Some Christian has crept hither unawares; 485
 The band and couch divine this race abhor.
 Let him by water and by chrism signed⁸³
 Depart, and let Proserpine return.'
 He spoke, and bloodless fell; the prince himself,
 As though he saw Christ's threatening thunderbolt, 490
 Grew pale, and putting off his royal crown,
 Looked round those standing near to see what youth
 Signed with the holy symbol of the cross

81 Cf. *ibid.* 3.66.

82 Cf. *ibid.* 10.646.

83 Reference to Christian baptism and confirmation; cf. Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 4.27 (Vol. 49, this series).

Had muddled Zoroaster's magic spells.⁸⁴
 An armor-bearer from the royal guard 495
 Of fair-haired youths was seized, who, throwing down
 His double-headed spears with jewels set,
 Acknowledged that he bore the sign of Christ.
 The prince uprose, and banishing the priest,
 He fled in terror from the marble fane; 500
 The trembling guards, unmindful of their lord,
 Look up to heaven and to Jesus pray.

Judaea, do you not deplore your crime?
 Lo, Christ your God your Sabbath has annulled
 And raised man to a Sabbath infinite. 505
 He has shone forth on nations and on kings;
 He rules the world, and mighty Rome has forced
 To yield her false Tarpeian gods to Him.
 Learn from your bitter woes, unhappy race,
 Who smites your vain beliefs and carnal laws, 510
 Who tramples on you with avenging power.
 Do not the quarried stones of Solomon
 Now lie in ruins, that temple built by hand?⁸⁵
 Why so? The mortal hand of mason wrought
 That short-lived work. It rightly lies in ruins, 515
 Since every work of art returns to nought.
 All that is made is doomed one day to fall.
 Learn what our temple is, if you would know;⁸⁶
 It is one that no artisan has built,
 A structure not of riven fir or pine, 520
 Nor reared with blocks of quarried marble fair.
 Its massive weight no columns high support
 Beneath the arches of a gilded vault.
 By God's Word it was formed, not by His voice,

⁸⁴ Julian the Apostate had revived the cult of Mithras, the origin of which had been attributed to the Persian lawgiver, Zoroaster.

⁸⁵ Cf. Acts 7.47,48.

⁸⁶ Cf. Heb. 8.2.

But by the everlasting Word, the Word made flesh.⁸⁷ 525
 This temple is eternal, without end,
 This you attacked with scourge and cross and gall.
 This temple was destroyed by bitter pains.⁸⁸
 Its form was fragile from the Mother's womb,
 But when brief death the Mother's part dissolved, 530
 The Father's might restored it in three days.
 You have beheld my saving temple rise
 On high, surrounded by an angel throng.⁸⁹
 The everlasting gates⁹⁰ uphold its roof;
 Through lofty towers the glorious stairs arise, 535
 And at the top appears a shining path.
 Your offerings lie beneath a heap of ruins.
 What judgment you deserve Titus has taught,
 And Pompey, too; by their cohorts dispersed⁹¹
 Your race is borne through every land and sea. 540
 The Jew in exile wanders far and wide
 Since he was banished from his fatherland,
 And stained with blood of Christ, whom he denied,
 Has paid the penalty his crime deserved.
 See how the ancient virtue has declined! 545
 The noble heir of the faithful patriarchs
 Has been enslaved and is an outcast now.
 The thrall adopts the faith of recent times,
 So great its power. Confessing Christ, a race
 Once infidel prevails, but subject now 550
 To faithful lords, is that which doubted Christ.

Some heretics a doctrine teach, akin
 To Jewish rage, and follow Christ halfway.⁹²
 That He is truly man, this they affirm,

⁸⁷ Cf. John 1.14.

⁸⁸ Cf. Mark 14.58; John 2.19-21.

⁸⁹ Cf. Acts 1.10.

⁹⁰ Cf. Ps. 23.7.

⁹¹ Pompey took Jerusalem in 63 B.C., and Titus destroyed the city in 70 A.D.

⁹² The Ebionites, early Christian sects infected with Judaistic errors.

But not that He is God from heaven come. 555
 They own His virtue, but His power deny:
 His life they praise, His Godhead take away.
 The mighty work that shows both skill and power
 Is born of genius or of virile strength:
 One fruit of mind, the other of brute force. 560
 Both mortal are in man; for mind with age
 Grows weak, and time exhausts the strongest arms.
 This we believe not of the eternal power
 And glory of the Lord; we hold He springs
 Not from the seed of earth nor from man's sin; 565
 A heavenly fire engenders Him, not flesh
 Nor blood of father, nor impure desire.⁹³
 By power of God a spotless maid conceives,
 As in her virgin womb the Spirit breathes.
 The mystery of this birth confirms our faith 570
 That Christ is God: a maiden by the Spirit
 Is wed, unstained by love; her purity
 Remains intact; with child within, untouched
 Without, bright in her chaste fertility,
 Mother yet virgin, Mother that knew not man.⁹⁴ 575
 Why, doubter, do you shake your silly head?
 An angel makes this known with holy lips.⁹⁵
 Will you not hearken to angelic words?
 The Virgin blest, the shining messenger
 Believed, and by her faith she Christ conceived. 580
 Christ comes to men of faith and spurns the heart
 Irresolute in trust and reverence.
 The Virgin's instant faith attracted Christ
 Into her womb and hid Him there till birth.
 Believe what says the angel who was sent 585
 From the Father's throne, or if your stolid ear
 Catch not the voice from heaven, be wise and hear

⁹³ Cf. John 1.13.

⁹⁴ Cf. Luke 1.34.

⁹⁵ Cf. Luke 1.30-33.

The cry of aged woman, now with child.⁹⁶
 O wondrous faith! The babe in senile womb
 Greets through his Mother's lips the Virgin's Son, 590
 Our Lord; the child unborn makes known the cry
 Of the Child bestowed on us,⁹⁷ for speechless yet,
 He caused that mouth to herald Christ as God.
 Give me the prophecies, unroll the book
 That God inspired Isaia to bring forth: 595
 I love to read and ponder on the lines
 That golden hand in flaming letters wrote.
 Go hence, as the bright symbols I adore
 And weeping print fond kisses on the words;⁹⁸
 My joy gives rise to tears, joy makes them flow. 600
 The promised day that verse foretold has come,⁹⁹
 On which a Virgin Mother bore a Child,
 With faithful witness of her anxious spouse,¹⁰⁰
 And gave me sight of my Emmanuel.
 Is not this God now ours? With us as man 605
 Abiding, He confirms this name and makes
 The ancient scripture by His presence clear.

Is He not God whose crib the East adores,
 On golden salvers offering regal gifts
 To the swaddled Babe upon the Virgin's knee?¹⁰¹ 610
 What herald swifter than the southern wind
 Announced to peoples of the Bactrian lands
 The joyous dawn on which the Infant Christ¹⁰²
 Hung on the breast of His Mother undefiled?
 'We saw this Child borne through the stars,' they said, 615
 'Far brighter than the path of ancient signs,'¹⁰³

96 Cf. Luke 1.42-45.

97 Cf. Isa. 9.6.

98 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.687.

99 Cf. Isa. 7.14.

100 Cf. Matt. 1.18-22.

101 Cf. Matt. 2.11.

102 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 2.337.

103 Cf. Matt. 2.2.

A watcher on Chaldaean peaks at night
 Shuddered to see the Serpent disappear,
 The Lion flee, the Crab draw mangled feet
 Against his side, the vanquished Bull bemoan 620
 His broken horns, and sheared Goat fade away.
 Here vanishes the Water-bearer, there
 The Arrows, Twins bewildered stray apart,
 The Maid untrue forsakes her silent loves,
 And other fires that hang in frightful clouds 625
 Have trembled at the new-born Morning Star.
 The sun's pale car stands still, as he foresees
 That near eclipse, when veiled at noon his light
 Would be obscured in sable night by day,
 And earth in sudden gloom would hide its head.¹⁰⁴ 630
 Shall I not load this Child with gifts of myrrh,
 Incense, and gold? I know Him, what I owe.
 Shall I not worship Him beheld in sky
 And found on earth, who rules as king and God
 Both realms, who by His death hell's reign dissolves 635
 And bids the buried rise and follow Him?¹⁰⁵
 He dwells in heaven, sojourns on earth, invades
 The depths of hell. True faith this: He is God,
 Who is wholly everywhere.¹⁰⁶ Did idle dream
 Or word mislead those seers? Did they by chance 640
 Bring futile gifts or offer homage blind?
 What reason prompted them to bow their heads
 At Mary's feet or at the infant's crib
 If he was only man, and almighty power
 Filled not his tender frame with breath divine? 645

 Let pass the Magi, incense, gold, and myrrh,
 All showing Him true God, the manger, bands,
 His mother's bosom blest, bright from the star:

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Luke 23.44,45.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Matt. 27.52,53.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Augustine, *Epist.* 187.14 (Vol. 30, this series).

His power and miracles proclaim Him God.
 I see the wild winds suddenly grow calm 650
 When Christ commands;¹⁰⁷ I see the storm-tossed sea
 Grow smooth, with tranquil surface bright,
 At Christ's behest; I see the waves grow firm
 As the raging flood sustains His treading feet.
 He walks dry-shod upon the flowing tide 655
 And bears upon the flood with footsteps sure.¹⁰⁸
 He chides the winds and bids the tempest cease.¹⁰⁹
 Who would command the stormy gales: 'Be still,
 Your strongholds keep and leave the boundless sea,'
 Except the Lord and Maker of the winds? 660
 The snowy north wind and the eastern squalls
 Yield to the Lord of clouds and Ruler of storms¹¹⁰
 And sweep the tempest from the smiling sky.
 Who on the sea could walk, who with firm step
 Upon the flood could without sinking tread 665
 That path with soles upborne and feet unwet,
 Except the Author of the deep, the Spirit,
 Poured from the Father's lips, that moved across
 The waves,¹¹¹ not yet hemmed in by solid shores?
 As servant of its Lord, the sea sustained 670
 His step, becoming firm beneath His feet.

Why dwell upon Christ's wondrous works as God?
 You who His Godhead doubt, but own Him man,
 Observing them, will own that He is God.
 Clay with His sacred spittle mixed He smeared¹¹² 675
 On blinded eyes and sight with mud restored:
 The night of blindness found a cure in clay,
 And moistened earth dispelled the sightless gloom.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Matt. 8.23-27.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. John 6.19.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Mark 4.39.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.80.

¹¹¹ Cf. Gen. 1.2.

¹¹² Cf. John 9.6.

He showed the man a pool wherein to wash
 His grime away. Siloe gushes forth¹¹³ 680
 From time to time, not in continuous flow,
 And fills the pool brimful at intervals.
 The ailing throngs sigh for the grudging spring,
 Waiting to bathe sore limbs in the crystal pool.
 Upon the banks they lie, intent to hear 685
 The noisy outpour from the dripping rocks.
 Christ bids the man in this pure spring wash off
 The clay,¹¹⁴ and seeing new lights up his face.
 He knew that He from slime had shaped a form,
 Once dark, and healing from His lips had shed 690
 On the new Adam He had made before.
 Without the breath divine of the Lord on high
 Our earth was dry, not ripe for healing art,
 But since the Spirit from God's mouth bedewed
 The Virgin's soil, it is redeemable. 695
 Thence it draws sap, the saving unction spread,
 And light baptismal waters then infuse.
 The blind man, eyes now opened by Christ's mouth,
 Cries that the clay and water gave him sight
 And through the wondering towns the Author owns, 700
 The Author of the light and of the days,
 Who in His body showed to sinful man
 The cleansing virtue of the healing flood.

Of myriad works the world could not contain¹¹⁵
 I shall tell briefly of a very few. 705
 Five loaves and fishes two He orders placed¹¹⁶
 As food before the people thronging round
 Their Master, by their hunger undeterred,
 Who mindful not of food forgot their towns,

113 Cf. John 5.2,3,7.

114 Prudentius considers the pool of Siloe the same as the pool of Bethsaida (John 5.2).

115 Cf. John 21.25.

116 Cf. Mark 6.38-44.

Their forts, their markets, hamlets, trading posts, 710
 And cities, glad to feed upon His words.
 The festive gathering swarms upon the plain;
 By hundreds they recline in friendly bands,
 And round the countless boards they range themselves
 To dine on two small fish and scanty crusts 715
 He multiplies—know now that He is God!
 The banquet ended, plates still overflow,
 And with the crumbs twelve baskets then they fill;
 The rude swain strives with undigested fare,
 The waiter groans beneath his heavy load. 720
 Who can a great feast spread from viands few?
 Who but the Maker of our frame and all
 That nurtures it, who shaped the world from nought?
 Almighty God without the aid of seed
 Fashioned the earth, not as the sculptor dowers 725
 With life the block of bronze from metal fused.
 All that now is was nought: that nothingness
 Was into being brought and bidden grow.
 Small was the first creation, but it grew
 Till it became the mighty universe. 730
 Therefore, when I behold that meager fare
 Thus multiplied within the hands of Christ,
 Can I doubt that the elemental forms
 First made by Him from nothing, by degrees
 Have grown to that perfection we now see? 735
 Lest fragments should be trodden on and lost,
 When men had fed, or should become the spoil
 Of wolves or foxes or of petty mice,
 Twelve men were charged to heap in baskets full¹¹⁷
 The gifts of Christ to keep and spread afar. 740

But why do I, unworthy as I am,
 With quavering voice sing these holy deeds?
 Come, Lazarus, from the tomb and say whose voice

¹¹⁷ Allusion to the twelve apostles.

You heard in depths of earth, what fiat pierced
 The dark abode of death, so that when Christ 745
 Bids you return to life, you heed His word,
 As though near by, and rise without delay¹¹⁸
 What gulf so nigh joins to the living world
 The neighboring realm of shades? Where is the cave
 That plunges downward into vasty hell, 750
 The river rolling fire 'tween banks unfilled?
 Before the entrance to the tomb, closed fast
 By monstrous stones set in the tunneled rock,
 The Lord stands still and calls His dead friend's name.
 Then lo, as stones roll back, the loathsome grave 755
 Gives up the living bones, a walking corpse.
 Loose now, you joyful sisters, fragrant bands!
 The only odor there exhaled is scented balm,
 And breezes do not waft corruption's stench.
 Eyes freed from oozing matter glow again 760
 With bygone luster; by degrees the cheeks
 Once putrefied take on a rosy hue.
 Who could imbue the crumbling frame with life?
 He only, who the body gave, who breathed
 The living soul into the molded clay, 765
 From whom the slime received its sanguine bloom.
 O death, grown docile to authority,
 O death, once deaf, now taught to hear commands,
 Who has such mastery over you? Confess
 Jesus who wrests me from you to be God. 770
 Take those who Christ deny, none hinders you;
 Use power allotted you, in endless night,
 To hold blasphemers. Captive now, release
 The just, who know that Christ is God and man,
 That highest God put on our mortal flesh. 775
 He takes the form He shaped, nor thinks it shame
 To wear it. Body and living soul I mean.
 With hands He made the body, the soul He breathed

118 Cf. John 11.43,44.

From His own lips. The whole man God assumes,
Wholly from Him; the whole man He redeems,¹¹⁹ 780
The body from the tomb, the soul from hell.

Comes now a doubting casuist, who inquires:
'Is it of faith to hold that the breath of God,
Our soul, can suffer torment, that it goes
To deepest hell and there is burned by fire?' 785

Believe not that the soul is God, but that,
Though greater than all things, it too was made.
By God's mouth it was shaped and existed not
Before, but was created fair in form,
Endowed with grace divine and filled with God, 790

Like to its Maker, yet not God itself,
For not begotten, it God's creature is;
The Son alone came from the Father's heart,
True God. The soul that was not, being gained.
The Son is coeternal with the Father, 795

Ever in Him;¹²⁰ not made but born, He has
All that the Father has, whereas the soul
Is but God's image. Thus its Maker spoke
When He in His own likeness man designed.¹²¹
The image but reflects reality, 800

The image of the truth is not the truth.
The soul is like to God, for it is not
Consumed by time; wise and inclined to good,
It rules the world as queen, it sees before,
It plans, takes heed and speaks, makes words and laws, 805
Is skilled in arts and roams the heavens in thought.¹²²
Thus God has made the soul like to Himself;
All else He made unlike. For what has bounds
Can be discerned with ease, but God on high

119 Cf. Rom. 8.11; Col. 1.22.

120 Cf. John 1.1,2.

121 Cf. Gen. 1.26.

122 Cf. Wisd. 7.22-24.

Who fills the world¹²³ has in Him nought finite 810
 That human thought can grasp or entertain.
 That power cannot be fathomed which is limitless
 And fills the reaches of unmeasured space.
 The foul corruption of the flesh receives
 The soul, which is created and is less 815
 Than God, but greater than all creatures else,
 With power o'er all, and the tainted body shares
 Its own defilement with the soul at birth.
 Our sinful clay then mingles with pure spirit.
 You may deny the soul was formed or made 820
 Since from the Lord's mouth it has flowed, as if
 A part of God could be defiled with sin
 And be condemned to hell (a crime to say).
 It is of God, I grant, yet what in time
 Began may not be called a part of God, 825
 Nor prior to the body deemed to live.
 It was created when the friendly heart
 It entered as a sister, taking up
 Its dwelling with its brother, new-formed clay.
 It is indeed the breath of God, but not 830
 His essence whole, breathed forth with that control
 Which He who breathed determined to maintain.
 We cannot gaze into the depths of God,¹²⁴
 But man of Deity the mirror is.¹²⁵
 We incorporeal being may discern 835
 Though Christ, who showed the Father in His flesh,¹²⁶
 Mark how diverse are vapors we exhale
 When from our lips the breath of air we blow.
 Now torrid breath a current warm emits
 And pours forth humid clouds from moistened throats; 840
 Now, when we please, the airy breath comes forth
 Like chilling wind and makes a whistling sound.

¹²³ Cf. Wisd. 1.7.

¹²⁴ Cf. Wisd. 9.13; 1 Cor. 2.16.

¹²⁵ Cf. Wisd. 7.26.

¹²⁶ Cf. John 14.9,10.

Add, too, the varied breath the flute imbibes:
 Now feeble, rendering the tone subdued,
 Now with strong blasts producing swelling notes; 845
 It loudly rends the air or faintly sighs;
 With scanty breath indrawn it makes shrill sounds,
 Or a low murmur gently presses out.

When this in mortal body you can do,
 Why should you not believe the eternal God 850
 Could into man infuse what soul He willed?
 And since within set bounds He breathed it forth,
 It must have been created. While our soul
 Knows many things, it reaches not to all.
 Since it is finite and omniscience lacks, 855
 It is created; cause and source it had.
 Learn from a likeness whether it is made.
 The hand of God the human body formed,
 His fingers shaped the clay.¹²⁷ But does this mean
 The hand of God has joints? Has it a palm? 860
 Do fingers close or open wide at will?
 Our hand is fashioned thus; no hand like this
 The Lord unbounded has, but we to Him
 Ascribe a form the human mind can grasp.
 As He is said the body to have shaped 865
 In a corporeal way, so the spirit of man,
 Formed by ethereal breath, is said to be
 The work of His mouth, through which the soul flashed forth,
 Aware that it was made with finite powers.
 If of His hand our flesh is not the work, 870
 Then neither is our soul, caused by His breath
 And lodged in its proper seat, work of His mouth.
 All things brought forth in time have fixed abode,
 And what is held in narrow bounds is small,
 Not everywhere diffused; what is so small 875
 As to be set in space, unstable is

¹²⁷ Cf. Gen. 2.7.

And subject to corruption; the corrupt
 Has hell deserved; such being is not God.
 Or if the soul is divine, what means the grace
 New-poured into the soul deprived of Christ, 880
 Which by baptism justified, the Spirit
 Adorns as God's handmaid with further light?
 Since grace is given or denied by worth,
 To say the soul is God or part of God
 Is nonsense, for it freely drinks this grace, 885
 Then loses it by sin and crime; now yields
 To punishment, then treads it under foot.

Does it surprise you that the soul can sin,
 Which in a house of flesh was made to dwell,
 When the very angel sins¹²⁸ who tarries not 890
 In fragile mortal frame? He sins for he
 Was made and not begot; how so the Lord
 Who made him knows. Enough that I believe.
 The world's Creator alone is free from sin,¹²⁹
 The unbegotten and begotten God, 895
 The Father and Son. Alone exempt from pain,
 He lives untouched and knows no bitterness.
 Say that the soul is free from cross and woes,
 If you have found it free from sin and crime.
 The being that can sin can suffer pain. 900
 Untarnished when created was the soul
 That mingling with our clay caused it to live,
 For primal shape it took from source divine
 And of celestial brightness it was born,
 But joined to heavy earth and too much charmed 905
 By sweet allurements, its first fervor cooled,
 And in the mire it soiled its precious flame
 By spurning and transgressing God's decrees.
 Such was the soul's first state. Created pure,

128 Cf. Job 4.18; 2 Peter 2.4.

129 Cf. 2 Cor. 5.21; 1 John 3.5.

Through sordid union with the flesh it fell 910
 Into iniquity; stained by Adam's sin,
 It tainted all the race from him derived,¹³⁰
 And infant souls inherit at their birth
 The first man's sin; not one is sinless born.
 But we must shun the false belief that souls 915
 To offspring are transmitted with the flesh,
 As blood to veins formed by the parent stock.
 Souls breed not souls, but nature operates
 In unknown ways to make the vessels breathe
 And to the whole the spark of life impart. 920
 A new soul each new body permeates,
 But since it is not cleansed from ancient stain,
 In the sin of our first parents, it is old.
 Then nature's soil is laved in the second birth,
 When by baptism we are born again, 925
 And the old Adam our fair soul puts off.¹³¹
 Joined to the body, it finds cause of sin
 In promptings of the flesh and also leads
 Its comrade into sin; hence vengeful fire
 Embraces both the culprits and subjects 930
 To equal torments the associates in crime.

Christ frees us from these torments, who was born
 Of sinless mother and sinless body wore.
 Jesus assumed a nature exposed to pain,
 But not to sin's contagion; undefiled 935
 And free from guile and every trace of sin,
 He, therefore, owed no debt to punishment.¹³²
 Could punishment that follows sin affect
 Christ's body? Could death, where human sin is not?
 Vain and impotent would their efforts be 940
 For sin in Him no fuel would supply.

¹³⁰ Cf. Rom. 5.12.

¹³¹ Cf. Eph. 4.22-24.

¹³² In two MSS the following line is inserted here: *quid peccatorum
 prosapia corpore in illo.*

Death feeds on sin; the one who has no sin
 Slays death made weak by lack of sustenance.¹³³
 Thus in Christ's body death was nullified,
 Thus did it perish from lack of wonted food. 945
 Adore divinity immune from sin,
 The nature of the Father and of Christ;
 Cease to excite ill-will against our soul
 By saying it is God or part of God;
 To cut a part from Christ or God is wrong 950
 Or to decrease the Godhead, ever whole.

We must expose the doctrine dark and vague¹³⁴
 Composed of subtle atoms closely joined,
 Which empty falls and fades away like wind
 And lacking substance quickly disappears. 955
 The Manichaeon says a phantom God
 Without real body flitted round, a shade
 With hollow form and nothing tangible.
 But first consider whether aught unreal
 Should be ascribed to God, whose glory pure 960
 Admits no fraud. Would He array Himself
 With members false, pretending to be man
 And lying when He said: 'Deep-seated ills
 I cure and sins forgive; the Son of Man
 Has power to cast out disease of flesh, 965
 To loose and break the bonds of wickedness;
 Arise, now hale, arise now innocent,
 Take up thy bed, I Son of Man command?'¹³⁵
 Does He not know Himself and His own flesh?
 When His disciples truly He forewarned 970
 What sufferings the Son of Man would bear,¹³⁶

¹³³ Cf. Rom. 6.22,23.

¹³⁴ In lines 952-1084, the poet condemns the heresy of the Docetists, who taught that the humanity of Christ was an illusion. Various forms of Docetism were current among the Gnostics and the Manichaeans.

¹³⁵ Cf. Matt. 9.2-6.

¹³⁶ Cf. Matt. 26.2.

Did He not own Himself to be true man
 With all His Father's power? If this I doubt,
 They were deceived. Would you God's essence know,
 O Manichaeon, He is truth; if false, 975
 He is not God: God's dealings are not false.
 You bring against the eternal God the charge
 That He has come to us in spurious form.
 Be silent, madman; bite your tongue, base dog!
 Devour your words with lacerated mouth. 980
 Matthew defies your barkings, stems your rage
 For he records the human lineage¹³⁷
 Of Christ incarnate, reckoning the names
 Of six times seven men and tracing the course
 Of noble blood through His ancestral line. 985
 Christ came the seventh cycle to complete
 By adding to the sixth the number that brings
 The year of peace, when various bonds are loosed
 And mankind is redeemed from human death.¹³⁸
 For then imperfect was our mortal clay, 990
 But Jesus comes the only perfect man
 In whom the seven sevens were complete
 That crowned the human race with endless worth.
 The seventh sabbath He fulfills for us,
 That joined at last to God, our flesh may rest,¹³⁹ 995
 Which for six sabbaths bore the wounds of sin.
 Let us the known succession scan and trace
 The line of kings: you will discern that Christ
 From human forebears came, of David's seed
 And of his blood accounted as an heir. 1000
 What say you of the sacred words of Luke
 When he the genealogy repeats,¹⁴⁰
 The fleshly line retracing through old sires?

137 Cf. Matt 1.1-17.

138 An allusion to the Jewish year of jubilee which followed seven cycles of seven years; cf. Lev. 25.8-10.

139 Cf. Heb. 4.9.

140 Cf. Luke 3.23-38.

Up generations seventy and two
 Christ mounts—so many teachers into the world 1005
 He sent—and by the steps down to His birth
 Goes back to Adam, head of earthly flesh.
 The Father then receives His Son and us,
 And Adam son of God becomes through Christ.¹⁴¹
 Nought now remains but that you deem this race 1010
 Unreal, Levi, Juda, Simeon,
 King David, other mighty kings, unreal,
 The virgin's swelling womb itself grown big
 With lying vapor, flimsy clouds, and mist;
 That airy blood dissolves, the bones grow soft 1015
 And melt, the trembling muscles disappear;
 That every deed the idle wind dispels,
 The breezes scatter, all an empty tale.

If Christ my nature takes not on Himself,
 What does He do? Whom does He free from sin, 1020
 If he disdains or shrinks from flesh He made?
 Is He ashamed to wear an earthly form
 Who did not take it ill to handle clay¹⁴²
 When once He made our body out of slime,
 Not flesh as yet, but viscid lump of mire, 1025
 And molded with His thumb our mortal frame?
 Such love of earth,¹⁴³ such love of us He has,
 He deigns to grasp the fertile clod of soil
 With hands divine, nor deems it base to touch
 The slimy mass. Command He gave that light 1030
 Be made; as He commanded it was made.¹⁴⁴
 All things came into being at His word;
 Man only merited to take his form
 From the Lord's own hand, born of God's workmanship.
 Why has our clay been favored with such love 1035

¹⁴¹ Cf. Luke 3.38.

¹⁴² Cf. Gen. 2.7.

¹⁴³ Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 2.301.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.* 1.3.

That by the hands of the Lord it should be shaped,
 Blessed by His skill, ennobled by His touch?
 God willed that Christ be joined to spotless clay;
 Hence He held worthy what He deigned to mold
 With sacred hands and make His dearest Son. 1040
 Our weakened nature lost the shapely form
 Of molded earth and fell a prey to death,
 But God's eternal nature willed to assume
 Our fragile clay, first tainted by our use,
 That it might be corruptible no more. 1045
 Christ is our flesh; He dies, He rises for me;¹⁴⁵
 I die, and by Christ's power I rise again.
 When Christ is dead and is entombed with tears,
 I see myself; when from the grave He comes,
 I see my God. If of my body He 1050
 A phantom is, He is a phantom of God;
 In both Christ must be false, if Christ can feign.
 If He is not true man, proved by His death,
 He is not the true God His works declare.
 Believe He died or doubt He rose again, 1055
 And on two grounds deny that Christ is real.
 If Jesus did not die and rise again,
 Where is divinity? God's might appears
 When, dead and buried, He returns to life.
 Whoever says that Christ is God must say 1060
 That He is man, or rob Godhead of power.
 I know my body will arise in Christ:
 Why bar my hope? I shall return by paths
 He trod in conquering death; this we believe.
 Whole I shall rise; renewed, not less than now 1065
 Nor otherwise: my face, my strength, my hue,
 The same will be; the tomb will give me up
 Without the loss of even tooth or nail.
 He who bids me return, nought weak will raise;

145 Cf. Rom. 4.24,25; 1 Cor. 15.22.

If corruption rise, resurgence there is none.¹⁴⁶ 1070
 What trial has snatched from me, what plague or pain
 Has worn away, what wasting age cut off,
 All will my risen body join again.
 For vanquished death should nothing maimed give back
 From defrauding grave, though bodies it devoured 1075
 Were maimed already; but disease and pain
 Were death's domain; what piecemeal it consumed,
 It will give back somehow, so that the dead
 Will rise with bodies undeformed and whole.
 O banish fear, my body, and believe 1080
 That you with Christ, our God, will rise, for He
 Is clothed with you and calls you back with Him.
 Laugh at disease, defy misfortune's blows,
 Despise the tomb. Go, where Christ risen calls!

146 Cf. 1 Cor. 15.42,43.

THE ORIGIN OF SIN

(HAMARTIGENIA)

THE ORIGIN OF SIN

Preface

Two brothers, one a yoeman and a shepherd one,¹
The first offspring of her who was of women first,
From fruits of their own labors on the altar place
The firstlings to be offered as a gift to God.
One offers fruits of earth, one living creature gives; 5
Competing in their diverse gifts, they immolate
The one a lamb, the other produce of his fields.
God looked with favor on the younger's sacrifice
But frowned upon the offering by the elder brought.
Hark, from the heavenly throne a mighty voice sounds: 10
'Be silent, Cain; for if you rightly offer gifts,²
But you divide them not according to just rule,
Your impious offering becomes a grievous fault.'
The elder brother, jealous of the virtue blessed,
Then arms his bloody hand and with his weeding hook 15
He strikes and cruelly breaks his younger brother's neck.
By this unhallowed crime he stained the new-formed world,
To be made clean in its declining years
By the sacred blood of Christ, which overcame the fiend.
With wounding of the innocent, death first began, 20
And when the sinless One was struck, it ceased to be;
In sin it had its origin, in sin it fell,
For Abel it destroyed first, then struck down Christ,
And met its end by wounding One who has no end.
The ancient story thus foreshadowed things to come; 25

¹ Cf. Gen. 4.2-5.

² Cf. Gen. 4.7, according to the Septuagint; also Ambrose, *De Cain et Abel* 2.6 (Vol. 42, this series).

The latest slaying was prefigured by the first,
 When that rude countryman who sowed the seeds of death,
 Upon the altar placing homely fruits of earth
 And deeming God the God of dead and lifeless things,
 In his black envy of the living offering 30
 Thought meet for sacrifice crops dug from earth with spades.
 I see the one of whom this figure is a type,
 The heartless fratricide, the jealous murderer,
 Who basely rends the form of sacrificial rites
 And thinks that he more justly offers vows to God. 35
 Marcion³ it is, a creature of the vilest clay,
 Who sows a doctrine of two Gods, against the Spirit,
 Presenting gifts of flesh impure and stained with guilt,
 And worshiping the eternal God in separate forms.
 If he would silence keep and mind the warning voice, 40
 The Christian body would enjoy unruffled peace
 In worship of one living God of living things.
 Devoting all his being to an empty creed,
 He impiously divides the sovereign Deity;
 Distinguishing the bad and good as separate realms 45
 Of two Godheads, he entrusts to them these scepters twain,
 Believing to be God one he as evil owns.
 He is a bloody Cain, abhorring unity,
 A cultivator of the world, foul murderer,
 Whose sacrifice is vile and savors of the earth, 50
 The earth of man's decaying body, putred clay
 Composed of muddy water mingled with the dust
 That flowers by nature in luxuriant wickedness,
 Engendering the myriad crimes of guilty men,
 And slays the living soul by foulness of the flesh. 55
 The body darts its arrows at its sister soul,

3 Marcion was a heretic of the second century, who held that there are two Gods, one the God of the Jews and the author of evil; the other the God of the New Testament, the God of goodness who manifested himself in Jesus Christ. He rejected the Old Testament and accepted only those portions of the New Testament that reveal a good and merciful God.

The soul is tossed about within the drunken brain,
 From which it draws outbursts of wild insanity
 Arising from the feverish poison of the flesh.
 The everlasting God it splits into two Gods 60
 And dares divide the indivisible Godhead;
 It perishes, slain in denying one true God,
 And Cain rejoices in the death of brother soul.

Where does your madness lead you, faithless Cain,
 Divider blasphemous of God? Do eyes,
 Befogged, the one Creator not behold?
 The bleary eye in two directions turns 5
 And ever tricks the sight with double shapes.
 Duped by the twofold nature of the world,
 You fancy that two Gods in heaven reign.
 The sordid world unites the different realms
 Of good and bad, but heaven obeys one Lord.
 The heavenly kingdom does not have two kings 10
 Because two powers control the minds of men.
 The earthly man such dualism sees
 And thinks two Godheads rule the separate spheres.
 When he assumes that one God evil made
 And one the good created, he implies 15
 That these two Gods are sovereign though unlike.
 How can two natures stand or reign for long,
 Removed by different source from highest power
 And weakened by alternate primacies?
 Either there is one God with sovereign power,⁴ 20
 Or else, if two, each is reduced in might.
 No sovereignty exists except in one
 With plenitude of power, for when two claim
 The primacy, each cannot have full sway.
 Shared rule is never absolute, for both 25
 Have not like power; the cleavage weakens might.

4 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.100.

We own one undivided, perfect God,
 In whom is Christ, all perfect too and one
 Who lives and ever lived above all things,⁵
 And who shall live with none to share His throne. 30
 The Father is all-powerful, Lord of all,
 The God of hosts, Creator of the world,
 The Source of being, Cause of every birth,
 From whom all flows, all light and times and years
 And number, who after one the second gave, 35
 For number starts with one, and one alone
 Cannot be counted. Since no second God
 And Father is, and second Christ is not,
 God prior to number is who has one Son.

He is true God, for He is first and one, 40
 First in Himself and Him whom He begot.
 For what does simple generation mean?
 The Father and the Son by Him begot
 Ere time and number, ever will be one.
 Who would dare name as two the eternal One, 45
 Who self-existing reigns in majesty,
 And shatter thus the power of one Godhead.
 Did the Father take to Himself a Son
 So that one alien to Him might make two
 And usher in a twofold Deity? 50
 The image of the Father,⁶ He is true Son,
 And this same likeness proves that God is one.
 No alien love or pledge unites the two,
 But true affection and the essence sole,
 Which God is, shapes a perfect unity. 55

This faith offends you, Marcion, this your sect
 Condemns, dividing heaven between two lords.
 What mists obstruct your view, what sleep benumbs

⁵ Cf. Eph. 1.21; Phil. 2.9.

⁶ Cf. Heb. 1.3.

Your senses, that you see two phantom forms
 Disparted in a twofold heavenly realm. 60
 If crass stupidity besets your mind,
 Behold the elements clear to earthly eyes,
 Signs that reveal the mystery of God.
 The Father foreknew this heresy of one
 Who would the Lord of light and earth divide, 65
 And make Him twofold king of a sundered realm.
 Wherefore He set before our eyes a sign
 And visible proof, lest man should think two Gods
 [Rule over cosmic space in diverse forms.]⁷
 One fire in heaven's mighty vault gives rise 70
 To passing days, one sun begets the year;
 Threefold, without division, in three ways
 It shows its power: it shines, revolves, and burns,
 It moves, it warms with heat, and gleams with light.
 Here three things coexist, light, warmth, and speed, 75
 Yet one same heavenly orb effects them all,
 In one round faithful to its varied tasks,
 And one same substance functions in all three.

Nought would I dare make equal unto God,
 Nor to the Lord compare His thrall, the sun, 80
 But from small things the Father has decreed
 That men should glimpse His might invisible.
 In the glass of little things, we see things veiled
 And through the known can seek the hidden truth.
 No man has seen two suns unless half-blind, 85
 Or, if the shining sky is overcast,
 When a dark cloud obstructs the brilliant rays
 And breaks the mirrored fire into false orbs.
 Souls have their clouds, their heavy fog;
 A cataract the mind's eye veils with mist, 90
 So that it cannot pierce the limpid sky
 And grasp God's unity with quick insight;

⁷ Bergman brackets this line which appears in one MS.

The unsound gaze forms for itself two suns
 And builds twin thrones for two supreme Godheads.
 If two, then why not many thousand Gods,⁸ 95
 Why is the Deity content with two?
 Was it not better to unloose whole swarms
 Of deities upon the nations everywhere
 And fill the world with monstrous demigods
 To whom rude savages vain worship pay? 100
 If different Gods a sundered heaven rule,
 Then it is proper to assign to clouds,
 To springs and roaring sea, to woods and hills,
 Caves, rivers, winds, to furnaces and mines,
 Their own divinities, each with due rights. 105

If you disdain to worship pagan gods
 And would have two of equal sovereignty,
 Tell me which has dominion over earth,
 Which rules the stormy sea with ageless law.
 Describe the realms assigned to these joint lords. 110
 'One dwells,' you say, 'in his grim citadel,
 Author of sin and crime, severe, unjust;
 All mischief seething in the world he sowed,
 And in snakes' venom soaking his new seeds,⁹
 He drew creation from the fuel of death. 115
 Creator of the world, he made the earth,
 The sea and stars,¹⁰ man with his frame of clay,
 Which fever would consume and sin defile,
 Which foul corruption of the grave would spoil.
 But proper to the other is a love 120
 Of holiness¹¹ and will to save mankind.
 Two Testaments from these two sovereigns flowed:
 The loving gave the New, the harsh, the Old.'
 This, Marcion, is your factious reasoning,

8 Cf. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 1.5.

9 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.193.

10 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 12.197.

11 Cf. Claudian, *Carmina Minora* 31.48.

Or frenzy rather of a mind deranged.¹² 125
 We know the father of sin exists, but know
 He is no God, nay even the slave of hell
 Deserving sentence to the Stygian fires,
 The God of Marcion, bitter, cruel, and false,
 His lofty snake-crowned head begirt with clouds¹³ 130
 And wreathed with smoke and fire, while jealousy
 That cannot bear the joys of the just
 Fills his malicious eyes¹⁴ with burning gall.
 A heavy mane of writhing snakes conceals
 His shoulders,¹⁵ and the vipers lick his face.¹⁶ 135
 He draws into a knot the rebounding noose
 In the slippery cord and with adroitness ties
 The twisted snares, making the shackles fast.
 To him belongs the art of hunting game,
 Of snaring reckless creatures in his nets 140
 And laying traps for prey in hidden spots.
 He is a hunter grim, who ceases not
 To wreak destruction on unwary souls,
 A Nebroth,¹⁷ who goes round the world, made rough
 With deep ravines¹⁸ and wooded crags, and strives 145
 To waylay some by fraud and secret wiles,
 To vanquish others by his giant arms
 And spread his deadly triumphs far and wide.
 Cold death, to what do you not drive men's hearts?¹⁹
 Man, shame to say, disowning the Lord of life,²⁰ 150
 Adores the cause of his ruin, the bloody fiend,
 And worships the blade about to murder him!
 So sweet is death to wretches charmed by sin,

12 Cf. Juvenal, *Satires* 14.136.

13 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.248-249.

14 Cf. Claudian, *In Rufinum* 1.138.

15 Cf. *ibid.* 1.42.

16 Cf. *ibid.* 1.96.

17 Cf. Gen. 10.8,9.

18 Cf. Claudian, *Probino et Olybrio* 105.

19 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.412.

20 Cf. Acts 3.14,15.

Such pleasure evil gives to darkened souls.
 He of whom sin was born is deemed a god, 155
 Who good with evil stained and white with black!²¹
 Mad equally were those who, people say,
 Fever and Scurf adored in sacred fanes.

The author of iniquity is not God.²²
 In mind of fallen angel sin was bred, 160
 Of one that like a mighty star once shone²³
 And with created splendor brightly burned.
 All things created are from nothing made;
 Not so is God, true Wisdom, and Holy Spirit,
 The living Trinity that ever was, 165
 But even angel ministers He made.
 One from their number, fair of countenance,
 Fierce in his might and by his strength puffed up,
 Upraised himself with overweening pride²⁴
 And of his brightness made a bold display, 170
 Till he persuaded some he was begot
 Of his own power, and being from himself
 Had drawn, to no creator owing birth.
 Hence, his allies resolved to found a sect
 Which holds that Satan out of darkness shone, 175
 Who had, concealed by everlasting night,
 Forever lived and reigned in a hidden world.
 Jealous, they tell, he of a sudden thrust
 His head out of the dark to ruin God's works.
 But this our reason spurns, for that one faith 180
 By Scripture handed down we may not doubt.
 'Nought without God was made' we read; all things
 By Him were made, and none not made by Him.²⁵
 But one that was created good and born

21 Cf. Juvenal 3.30.

22 Cf. Claudian, *De tertio cons. Hon.* 102.

23 Cf. Isa. 14.12.

24 Cf. Isa. 14.13,14.

25 Cf. John 1.3; Col. 1.16.

To do no wrong, pure from his origin, 185
 Soon of his own free will became corrupt,
 Defiled by envy and goaded by her stings.²⁶
 The spark of hate was fanned by jealousy,
 And sudden ire inflamed his wicked heart.
 He had seen how a form of clay grew warm 190
 At the breath of God, and lord of earth was made,²⁷
 So that the land and sea and sky had learned
 To shed their riches on their servant man
 And yield their plenty to an earthly king.
 The beast waxed proud, hate swelling in his soul, 195
 And from his sullen heart drew bitter strength;
 That beast, of old not prone, for wisdom kept²⁸
 His youthful form upright, now suddenly
 Makes strange contortions with his sinuous breast²⁹
 And twists his shining belly in tangled coils. 200
 His tongue, once single, darts his crafty speech,
 And, cleft by guile, gives forth his three-forked words;³⁰
 From him sin took its rise, from him the fount
 Of evil flowed, for he first sinned himself
 And without teacher led mankind to sin. 205

The world shares in the downfall of its head,
 And all the furniture of earth is marred.
 As when a brigand who sets out to rob
 The heedless traveler thinks not at first
 Of spoil, but strikes the man opposing him, 210
 That he may strip his victim of his cloak
 And take the riches from his lifeless form,
 So did the house of man, the bounteous earth,

26 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 11.337.

27 After this line one MS has the verse: *qui cunctum reget proprio moderamine mundum*, which may be translated, 'Who would with his own power rule the world.' It also appears in three other MS after lines 194 and 196.

28 Cf. Gen. 3.1.

29 Cf. Gen. 3.14.

30 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 3.439.

Fall into ruin when its master sinned,
 Absorbing evil from its lord's misdeed. 215
 Then from the sterile soil the grudging earth
 Bore tares and paltry burs in tainted fields³¹
 And ruined the growing wheat with barren oats.
 Then having killed the shepherd, lions fierce
 Learned on the blood of harmless calves to feed³² 220
 And mangle bullocks broken to the yoke.
 Aroused by plaintive bleats, the rabid wolf
 Forced entrance into full sheepfolds at night.
 All creatures in the art of theft were skilled,
 And cunning sharpened senses that were warped. 225
 Although a wall the thriving gardens bound,
 And vineyards with thick hedges be enclosed,
 The locusts will devour the budding shoots,
 And savage birds will pluck and tear the grapes.
 Why speak of plants imbued with poisonous drugs 230
 From which there oozed a dread death-dealing sap?
 Now noxious fluid wells in tender shrubs,
 Though nature once bore hemlock with no bane,
 And dewy flowers that bedeck the laurel green
 Gave harmless nourishment to wanton goats.³³ 235
 The very elements exceed the bounds
 Imposed by law and overrun all things,
 Shaking the universe with riotous strength.
 The battling winds lay waste the shady groves,
 And forests crash, uprooted by the storms. 240
 Elsewhere a raging torrent overleaps
 Its banks, the limits that were set for it,
 And spreading far, holds sway in ravaged fields.³⁴
 Yet the Creator no such fury willed
 For these at birth, but the world's licentiousness, 245
 Breaking through bounds, upset its peaceful laws.

31 Cf. Gen. 3.18; Vergil, *Eclogues* 5.37.

32 Cf. Claudian, *De cons. Stil.* 2.14.

33 Cf. Vergil, *Eclogues* 2.64.

34 Cf. Horace, *Odes* 1.2.13-20.

No wonder that the shattered elements
 Are tossed about, that earth's defective frame
 Is out of gear, and plagues exhaust the land.³⁵
 Man's conduct shows the way of sin to all, 250
 Man's conduct full of folly and deceit,
 Whence wars flare up, whence wanton pleasure flows,
 Whence lust grows hot with murky flame, and greed
 Gulps down its monstrous throat huge piles of gold,
 Its thirst for riches never satisfied, 255
 For avarice is increased with mounting wealth.
 Hunger for gold grows keen from gain of gold.
 Thence springs a crop of sins, sole root of vice,³⁶
 When luxury, seducer of modesty,
 Sifts all the gushing springs and secret mines, 260
 When empty show probes nature's mysteries
 And prys into the dusty veins of earth
 In hope of finding in its pitted depths
 Some precious stones. For woman, not content
 With native charms, affects a beauty false, 265
 As if the hand of God gave her a face,
 Not yet complete, that she must needs adorn
 With crown of amethysts around her brow,
 Or string of gems encircling her fair neck
 And heavy emeralds hanging from her ears, 270
 With pearls from shellfish in her hair entwined
 And bands of gold securing braided locks.
 It would disgust to tell the impious pains
 That women take to paint the features dowered
 With gifts of God, so that the skin, deprived 275
 Of nature's hue, cannot be recognized.
 Such is the conduct of the weaker sex,
 Whose feeble mind sways with the tide of sin.³⁷

³⁵ Cf. Claudian, *In Rufinum* 1.370.

³⁶ Cf. 1 Tim. 6.10.

³⁷ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.532.

But does not man, the woman's head and lord,
 Who rules the portion torn from his own flesh,³⁸ 280
 Who holds the weaker vessel in his power,³⁹
 Yield to excess? One sees old men grow soft
 From luxury, though the Creator made
 Their members harsh and strong with rigid bones;
 It shames them to be men; they seek vain toys 285
 To make them shine and lose their native strength.
 They take delight in wearing flowing robes,
 Not made of wool, but spoils from eastern trees,⁴⁰
 And clothe their rugged frames in checkered stuffs.⁴¹
 They call on art to weave complex designs 290
 With threads of fibers dyed in plant extracts.
 The wool of beasts soft to the touch is combed.
 You see one running after tunics rare
 And weaving brodered robes with novel yarns
 From many-colored birds, one shame to say 295
 Exhaling womanlike outlandish scents
 From aromatic paints and powders strange.

Indulgence rules the organs of our life,
 Which the Creator in fine senses set.
 For ears and eyes, for nostrils, palate, too, 300
 We seek enjoyment stained with sinful arts;
 And even touch, which quickens all our frame,⁴²
 Strives for the sweet caress of luxuries.
 O sorrow! Nature's noble laws succumb,
 And all her gifts submit to pleasure's reign. 305
 All senses are misused, while men divert
 To opposite ends⁴³ what God gave for their weal.
 Have eyes, I ask, been placed beneath soft lids

38 Cf. Gen. 2.21,22.

39 Cf. 1 Peter 3.7.

40 The reference is probably to silk. Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 2.121; also Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 6.54; 11.76-77.

41 Cf. Juvenal 2.97; also Pliny 8.196.

42 Cf. Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 6.23.1 (Vol. 49, this series).

43 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.39.

That we may watch a dancer's shameful limbs
 Whirl in the theatre⁴⁴ and thus pollute 310
 Our wretched vision with obscene delights?
 Do we draw breath and from the middle brain
 Through our two nostrils send it forth again,
 That with licentious pleasure we may sniff
 The fragrance of a harlot's perfumed hair? 315
 Did God give open ears and bid the sound
 Pass through their channeled ways, that we might hear
 A lute-girl's empty melodies, the twang
 Of strings and banquet song of flaming lust?
 Does sense of taste implanted in the mouth 320
 Exist to whet the glutton's appetite
 And please his palate with high-flavored meats,
 That far into the night he may prolong
 His feasts and tax his stomach with excess?
 God has willed that by handling we should know, 325
 Through sense of touch, what things are hard or soft,
 What things are smooth or rough, what hot or cold;
 But we our bodies pamper on soft beds
 With downy comforts and fine linen spread.

Blest is the man who can with temperance use 330
 The gifts bestowed, and in enjoying them
 A sober limit keep, whom worldly pomp,
 With its delights and wealth of tinsel show,
 Does not enamor like a foolish child,
 Who underneath deceptive sweetness sees 335
 The hidden poison that appears as good.
 Yet good and holy this once was for us,
 When at creation's dawn Christ made the world.
 For God saw it was good, as Moses proves,
 Who of the world's beginnings was the scribe. 340
 'God saw,' he says, 'that all He made was good.'⁴⁵

44 Cf. Claudian, *In Eutropium* 2.359-360.

45 Cf. Gen. 1.31.

This I believe and firmly keep in mind,
 Which, God inspiring him, that holy seer
 Declared when he described creation's dawn:
 Whatever God and Wisdom made is good. 345
 The Father is the Author of all good
 And with Him Christ, for Father and Son are one,⁴⁶
 Because one common nature makes them one
 In will, in power, in goodness, and in love.
 Yet there are not two Gods, nor makers two, 350
 Since in their nature they are not distinct
 Nor sundered in their works nor in their will,
 But one Creator made all that was good.

No muddy stream flows from the source, no rill
 Or spring is foul or turbid at its mouth, 355
 But when clear waters lave the sandy banks,
 They are defiled by contact with the mire.
 Did horse and iron and bull and rope and oil
 Have malice in them when they first were made?
 When man is slain, the iron is not the cause 360
 But cruel hands; and in the circus wild⁴⁷
 The horse is not the source of the mad uproar.
 The mob's unreason, not the horses' speed
 Runs wild; vile passion spoils a useful gift.
 We know that Spartans in their wrestling bouts⁴⁸ 365
 Were smeared with oil, and balm was thrall to sin;
 Along a slender rope with footsteps sure
 A reckless dancer mounts the lofty stage;
 With flying leap the rash jump over beasts
 And in the midst of mortal hazards play. 370
 The bloody shows depend on public will,
 And men by law are paid to risk their lives
 That human members torn by blood-stained jaws

46 Cf. John 10.30.

47 Cf. Tertullian, *Apology* 38.4 (Vol. 10, this series).

48 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.281.

May please a mob that takes delight in death.

To name the other follies of the world 375
 Would nauseate, delights that rob mankind
 Of thought of God and lead to grief and sin.
 None to the highest Father lifts his mind,⁴⁹
 None sends his sighs to heaven nor regards
 His Maker, mindful of his lofty birth, 380
 And none directs his hope beyond the skies.
 Man yields his soul to an infernal power,
 Content to lie beneath his heavy load,
 And groveling, gropes for fleeting earthly joys.
 What earth brings forth, he sees as fair, what fame 385
 Bestows, what sinful pleasure recommends,
 What passes like the dust blown by the wind,
 What vanishes like unsubstantial mist.
 To these iniquities the powerful robber drives
 Weak souls, when he invades the hearts of men 390
 With his insidious powers; he sows in them
 All sins and spreads his crew through every part.
 There, subject to this prince, a mighty troop
 Makes war and harries souls with dreadful arms:⁵⁰
 Wrath, superstition, grief, dissension, gloom, 395
 Vile thirst for blood, the thirst for wine, for gold,
 Ill-will, adultery, fraud, detraction, theft.⁵¹
 Their hideous forms and threatening looks appall.
 Ambition is puffed up and knowledge proud,
 Eloquence rants, deceit weaves secret snares. 400
 Here carping talk throughout the forum sounds,⁵²
 There cheap philosophy upholds the staff
 Of Hercules and shows from street to street
 Her naked sophists, while idolatry
 Kneels at deaf altars and wax-coated stones. 405

49 Cf. Rom. 8.11.

50 Cf. Eph. 6.12.

51 Cf. Gal. 5.19-21; Rom. 1.29,30.

52 Cf. Ovid, *Ibid.* 232.

Alas, with what array the foe attacks
 Mankind, with what armed minions does that chief
 Wage war, and with what might he wins the fray!
 The Chanaanite,⁵³ grim-helmed, springs to his aid
 With close-packed troops, shaking his heavy beard 410
 And brandishing his sword with mighty hand.
 The Amorrhite host on the other side
 With fury burns, while hordes of Gergesites
 Pour over all the plain in flying ranks.
 Some from a distance fight, some hand to hand. 415
 On fire for battle, see the Jebusite troops;
 Their golden javelins stained with dragons' blood
 With deadly splendor glow and shine and slay.
 It pleases you, Hethite, to arm with spears
 Your dreadful bands; but Pherezites, alike 420
 In spirit though not in arms, with arrows charge.
 And last the Hevite king brings up his force,
 His scaly breastplate made of serpent's skin.
 Abetted by these troops, the wicked fiend
 Subdues weak souls, who guileless and unskilled 425
 In war, at first as allies trust these bands⁵⁴
 By virtue of pretended amity,
 And follow Mammon through their love of peace.
 Then carried off in chains, they bend their necks
 Beneath a cruel yoke, and vile behests 430
 Of wretched spirits they willingly obey.
 One who would swell his dower with needless lands,
 And scorning bounds, desires his neighbor's farm,⁵⁵
 Is being led before triumphal cars,
 Hands tied behind his back and girt with chains,⁵⁶ 435
 Yet knows not he is thrall to savage power.
 Another scaling heights of windy fame,
 Puffed up with popular applause,

⁵³ Cf. Gen. 10.15,16; Jos. 11.3; 24.11.

⁵⁴ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.371.

⁵⁵ Cf. Horace, *Satires* 2.6.8,9.

⁵⁶ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.57.

Deems it the greatest good to win high place,
 To awe the trembling prisoner at the bar, 440
 To punish wretched backs with cruel rods,
 And wield the fearful axes of the law:
 This man has thrust his head into the noose,
 And shackled feet are chafed by slavery's chains.

Believe, O captive mortals, now condemned 445
 To durance in the enemy's prison house,
 In galling bondage to an occult power,
 This is that Babylon, that banishment
 And conquest of our race by Assyria's king,⁵⁷
 Which Jeremia mourned in tearful song, 450
 Dirge for a city of its people reft.

Is it not clear that souls of Jacob's seed
 Taste foreign exile in the Persian realms,
 Enslaved and subject to their alien laws?
 There they forget their native mode of life, 455
 And putting off ancestral ways, they yield
 To pagan rules, adopt new speech and dress,
 Defile themselves with heathen sacrifice,
 And banish Sion's nurture from their hearts.

Unmindful of their fatherland, they break 460
 Their sacred harps and foreign rites observe.⁵⁸
 Was it not better for their sires to bear
 The rule of Memphis' court, to warm themselves
 At hostile fires, beneath grim Pharaoh's feet,
 Inured to slavish toil in clay and straw 465
 And surfeited with undigested meats?⁵⁹

Why did the Lord preserve that rebel race
 With bounty undeserved and wondrous signs,
 Removing from their necks the servile chains,

⁵⁷ Cf. 4 Kings 24.14-16.

⁵⁸ Cf. Dan. 3.7.

⁵⁹ Cf. Exod. 16.3.

And curbing Egypt with the serpent rod?⁶⁰ 470
 What did it profit them to tread the path
 Through the withdrawing sea, where flooded rocks
 Lay bare beneath the unfamiliar sky,
 And thirsty slime grew dry in the watery deep,
 If the host that was triumphant by God's power 475
 And guided through the dark by pillared fire,
 Has lost that fruitful vale where grapes were found;⁶¹
 If it tills not the land where honey flows,
 And rivers are imbued with snow-white milk;
 If it lets Jericho by trumpets won 480
 Lift up again its ancient towering walls;
 If from the refluent Jordan's⁶² bank it turns
 And leaves the lands apportioned out by lot;
 If it cannot defend the city built
 With so much sweat, and towers that rise 485
 Beyond the clouds; if it knows not what stone⁶³
 Resists the foe, the bulwark of its walls,
 Which no war engine with its brazen head
 Can take by storm, nor blows of iron shake?
 This cornerstone is in the portal's arch, 490
 Uniting all, the threshold making firm.
 The man who heeds this stone set in his walls
 And with a triple bulwark girds himself,
 Taking his stand on a high tower, with faith
 In that true rock and with escutcheon pure, 495
 Will not be ravished by the Tyrian queen,
 Nor Parthian dweller on the Euphrates,
 Nor swarthy Indian⁶⁴ with his feathered crown.
 Nay, should the Philistine make war on you
 And seek with fiery giants to raze your camp. 500
 You will be safe, nor will that Charon grim,

60 Cf. Exod. 7.10.

61 Cf. Num. 24-27.

62 Cf. Jos. 3.16.

63 Christ, whom St. Paul calls the cornerstone; cf. Eph. 3.20.

64 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 4.293.

The god of Marcion who rules in realms
 Of darkness, drive you from your firm stronghold.
 Vain are all things the sun looks down upon,
 All from short-lived and crumbling matter made. 505

Unless I err, the apostle, having said
 Creation was made subject to vain strife,⁶⁵
 Deplored its bondage to the wily fiend.
 'He errs,' he says, 'who thinks our wrestling is
 With flesh and blood, with lust and bitter gall, 510
 And that the spirit sins from veins afire.

The flesh weighs not upon the soul, the world
 With the ethereal spirit does not contend,
 But night and day we wage a savage war
 Against the spirits of darkness in the sky, 515
 Who have domain in damp and cloudy air.'⁶⁶

In truth, the space midway 'twixt heaven and earth
 That holds the clouds suspended in its void
 Is the dominion of the various powers
 And dwelling of Belial's wicked crew. 520

It is with robbers such as these we strive,
 According to the apostle's sacred words.
 Let no man nature or the sting of flesh
 Blame for his sin; the passions can be tamed,
 Gross creature promptings can with ease be spurned, 525
 And fallen flesh and blood can be subdued.

The spirit from the heights of heaven sent⁶⁷
 Is nobler far, and if it wills to curb
 The lower members with relentless laws,
 No power can resist its kingly rule. 530

In man, a stronger force within instills
 Its bane and subtly strikes the spiritual soul.
 Not swifter flies through winds the Parthian shaft⁶⁸

65 Cf. Rom. 8.20-22.

66 Cf. Eph. 6.12; 2.2.

67 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 12.853.

68 Cf. *ibid.* 856-859.

Whose path cannot be seen by human eye;
 For swiftly flying on the wings of air, 535
 It comes unseen, and no vibrating sound
 Announces death's approach, before the dart
 Strikes deep into the breast its poisoned wound.
 But swifter and more deadly is that shaft
 The ruler of the shadowy world lets fly, 540
 A dart that baffles sight in its quick course
 And pierces deep into the inmost heart.

The soul by nature is not dull or slow
 To dodge the blow (for God has dowered it
 With spiritual fire, pure, wise, etheric, calm, 545
 Lively, intent, swift, agile, penetrant),
 If it but humbly praise and serve its Lord
 And sternly trample under foot the world,
 Delighting not in baneful wealth and spoils,
 Ill-gotten, of the earth, lest crushed beneath 550
 Their heavy weight and thrall to alien rule,
 It cannot shun the arrows of the foe.⁶⁹

Why blame all evil of the world and men
 Upon the enemy's spite, when sins arise
 From our own minds and have their source, their power, 555
 And very being in the fathering heart?⁷⁰
 The tempter is the author of our sins,
 But only as we will can he confuse
 Or trap us; we ourselves supply the lion⁷¹
 With abundant arms; the wild beast roars in vain 560
 Unless abetted by the human will.
 From our own body we beget our sin,
 As David, parent blessed otherwise,
 Begot the guilty Absalom;⁷² he was

⁶⁹ Cf. Eph. 6.16.

⁷⁰ Cf. Matt. 15.19.

⁷¹ Cf. 1 Peter 5.8.

⁷² Cf. 2 Kings 14-18.

The father of one patricidal son 565
 Among his blameless children, one who dared,
 Alas, to draw his sword against his sire
 And go to war with his own flesh and blood.
 Our hearts, likewise, bring forth a vile offspring,
 Who soon against us turn their vicious teeth 570
 And learn to live on their begetter's woes;
 For they devour their parents' fertile flesh
 And feed upon the death of their forbears.
 But that great king and prophet, too, of God,
 The root of virgin who would bear a child, 575
 Had children both ill-starred and virtuous,
 For Solomon's own brother, Absalom,
 Brought sorrow to a just and noble house.
 Not like to Solomon, we imitate,
 Base Absalom, who shed his kinsman's blood. 580

If we may quote from heathen books, or cite
 Examples from the naturalists, they say⁷³
 The viper dies in giving birth to young,
 Made fruitful by her death and not by sex
 Or swelling of the womb, but at the rise 585
 Of female heat, she lures her doomed consort
 With open mouth; he thrusts his three-tongued head
 Into her jaws and then within her mouth
 He eagerly implants the venomous seed.
 The bride, enraptured, clasps her lover's neck 590
 And breaks it with her mordant teeth, the while
 She drinks the slaver of her dying spouse.
 In these delights the father dies, but soon
 The prisoned young the mother kill; for when
 The growing bodies in their warm retreat 595
 Begin to move and strike against the womb,
 The mother, conscious of her guilt, bewails
 The impious malice of her murderous brood

⁷³ Cf. Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 10.169.

As they break through the barriers to their birth.
 For since no vent for giving birth exists, 600
 The young lash at the belly as they strive
 To reach the light through lacerated sides.
 Then at the mother's death the dolorous troop
 Comes forth with scarce a struggle, as they carve
 Their way to life by crime; they slowly lick 605
 The corpse that bore them, orphans at their birth
 And posthumous children of their wretched dam.

Thus does our soul conceive: thus does it drink
 The deadly venom from the serpent's mouth,
 Wed to Belial's son; thus it admits 610
 His vile embrace, thus it is filled with sins,
 United with a partner doomed to die.
 Then it conceives and spawns a lethal brood
 Of vicious works from seed of that vile snake,
 Which by its pains must pay the penalty 615
 For ravishing the soul and all the world.
 Cruel wounds torment the soul, the thousand pains
 Of childbirth, as her monstrous progeny
 She brings to life, a multitude of sins,
 Offspring that on their mother's corpse have fed. 620

Hence comes that harsh reproach of Christ the Lord:
 'Is not the devil, ye unjust, I charge,
 The father who begot you in the flesh,
 Desirous of iniquity?'⁷⁴ Peruse
 The holy book: the Lord in words like these 625
 Rebuked unholy men: 'For love,' He says,
 'And acts of love would prove you to be sons
 Of my Father.'⁷⁵ O sightless lust! How can
 The soul that knows herself to nuptials true
 Affianced, called to marriage with a king, 630

⁷⁴ Cf. John 8.44.

⁷⁵ Cf. John 8.41,42.

One always young and never growing old,
 With countenance of lasting charm divine,
 Choose vile adultery and sell herself
 To foul embraces of the prince of night,
 Spurning the Son of God of Virgin born 635
 And deeming children of a brothel sweet?

I know the crafty charge against us hurled,
 With what sharp tooth relentless malice fights,
 And by attacking truth, calls us to strife.
 'If God wills not that evil be,' it says, 640
 'Why does He not forbid it? Whether He
 Created it or lets his fairest works
 Be spoiled by sin, means naught, when He has power
 To hinder it; if the Almighty willed
 All to live pure, no deed the will or hand 645
 Would stain. Therefore, the Lord created sin,
 Which He beholds from heaven and tolerates
 As though He made it; for He has himself
 Made all He sanctions or allows to be.'

Stop up my ears, good Father, close 650
 The winding channels of my foolish head,
 Lest it drink in such sounds; great gain it is
 To lose one vital function of the brain
 If, owing to a deafened ear, the soul
 May be kept free from hearing blasphemy. 655
 Who mindful of his excellence, derived
 From heavenly gifts, would bear these vile affronts
 Against his God? In brief, God's love is proved
 When fallen man He raises from the tomb
 And His celestial kingdom bids him share 660
 For all eternity. If He were cause
 And stay of evil, He would not have willed
 To save the sinner by redeeming grace
 When he incurred salvation's loss and death.

It is of man to fall, of God to save: 665
 Man dies because of sin, which God blots out,
 Proof that He wills not evil, nor approves
 Beforehand what He afterwards forgives.

'Can any sin despite the Thunderer's will,
 The will of Him who has the power to sway 670
 The heart of man, to foster chaste desires,
 And in his bosom every virtue plant?'
 Do you not know, O fool, the liberty
 Your Maker gave you? Know you not what power
 Was at Creation granted you to rule 675
 The subject earth and your own spirit, the power
 Of free will, right to will and do all things
 As you see fit, with free untrammelled soul?
 When He made you the lord of all the earth
 And bade Creation bow to your commands, 680
 Gave land, sky, sea, streams, winds for your domain,
 Would He have grudgingly withheld free will
 And liberty denied as not your due?
 How strong would be the chosen lord of earth?⁷⁶
 If he were not the ruler of himself? 685
 How lordly one whose spirit is not free,
 But subject to a stern unwavering law?
 What praise for virtue does a man deserve
 Unless he must make choice between two paths?
 He does good freely only when the power 690
 Is his to will and choose the opposite.
 He is not good, nor does he merit praise
 Who is not virtuous of his own free will,
 For virtue is ignoble that is forced;
 And virtue there is none unless it springs 695
 From spurning wrong and seeking righteousness.

'Go,' Adam's Father, God, and Maker says,

76 Cf. Gen. 1.28.

'Go forth, O Man, exalted by my breath,⁷⁷
 Not subject made, great ruler of the world
 And ruler of your own free spirit, to me 700
 Alone be subject with a bondage free.
 I bind you not by force, but counsel you
 To flee injustice and the right pursue.
 Light is to virtue joined, and death to vice.
 Choose life!⁷⁸ Uprightness leads to lasting bliss, 705
 And sin, in turn, will bring eternal doom;
 You have the freedom to decide your lot.'
 Made sovereign by this love and bounteous gift
 Man scorns these precepts, freely choosing death,
 And deems more useful what the crafty snake 710
 Prompts him to do against the will of God.⁷⁹
 The fiend prevailed by urging, not by force;
 The woman answered when rebuked by God
 That she by sly persuasion had been won,⁸⁰
 Then urged the man, who freely followed her. 715
 Was he not free to spurn her tempting words
 With upright soul? He was, for God before
 Had warned him to do good of his own will,
 But minding not, he yielded to the foe.
 Between the Lord of life and lord of death 720
 He stands: God calls him here, the devil there,
 And dubious, he shifts from side to side.

 Hear now a famous record of events
 Wherein the Scriptures traced a moral clear.
 From burning Sodom, Lot was hurrying forth⁸¹ 725
 And leading with him all his dear household
 To save them from the blazing town; the air

⁷⁷ Cf. Gen. 2.7.

⁷⁸ Cf. Deut. 30.19; Sir. (Ecclus.) 15.14-18.

⁷⁹ Cf. Gen. 3.1-6.

⁸⁰ Cf. Gen. 3.13.

⁸¹ Cf. Gen. 19.23.

Was filled with sulphurous clouds that veiled the sun,⁸²
 And rattling brimstone set the sky afire.
 An angel sent by God in twofold form⁸³ 730
 Had given orders that the family
 Should leave the city gates, and with their eyes
 Fixed on the plain, should not turn back to look
 Upon the fires that raged within the walls.
 'Let none, once he has stepped outside the gate, 735
 Of Sodom think, the type of earth's downfall,
 Nor turn his head to gaze upon the ruins.'
 Lot listened to this warning, but his wife,
 A fickle woman, backwards turned her glance
 And clung to her dear Sodom's luring charms. 740
 Eve had enticed her lord to share her sin,
 But Lot's wife only perished for her fault:
 Her body turned to frail dissolving stone,
 She stands a woman as she stood before,
 A pillar of salt that all her likeness keeps, 745
 Her grace, her dress, her brow, her eyes, and hair,
 Her face turned backwards and her chin inclined,
 The stark memorial of an ancient sin.⁸⁴
 Her moist form dissolves in salty sweats,
 But is not lessened by the dripping waste; 750
 However much the cattle lick away
 Enough is left of moisture, and the skin
 That has been worn away is soon restored.
 This monument the sinning wife deserved,
 Who let her wavering spirit melt away 755
 In lax resolves and flouted heaven's commands.
 But Lot pressed on with resolution firm,
 Nor did he turn to view the town reduced
 To ashes like a mighty funeral pyre,
 Its people and their life destroyed, its scrolls, 760

82 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.582.

83 Cf. Gen. 19.1.

84 Cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.204.

Its laws and forums, shops, resorts of vice,
 Its temples, theatres, circus, flowing bars.
 The fires of Sodom all the deeds of men
 Devour in righteous flames, by Christ's decree.
 It is enough to have escaped these once; 765
 Our Lot does not look back, but his frail wife
 Turns round to view the town from which she fled
 And in its embers now stands petrified.

Behold herein a sign of our free will,
 By which God wished to make us understand 770
 The path we tread depends on us alone,
 And we are free to follow either way.

Two were enjoined to flee from Sodom's walls:
 One goes with haste, the other hesitates;⁸⁵
 Each has free will, but each diversely wills. 775
 Each by his choice is drawn in opposite ways.

Examples can be found in Holy Writ:
 Mark Ruth and Orpha of the Moab race!⁸⁶
 One follows Noemi with trusting love,
 The other leaves her. Then no longer bound 780

By wedlock and the Hebrew marriage rites,
 They now were free, but Orpha's ancient faith
 Led her to choose a Gentile mate and rear
 The stock from which the fierce Goliath sprang.

Ruth, gleaning in the sunny fields, the hand⁸⁷ 785
 Of Boaz won, and in a wedlock chaste
 Brought forth the race of Christ, king David's line,⁸⁸
 And linked her mortal progeny with God.⁸⁹

I call to mind how often brothers twain
 Have reached a crossroad and reflected long, 790

85 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.641.

86 Cf. Ruth 1.4.

87 Cf. Ruth 2.3.

88 Cf. Ruth 4.17-22.

89 Cf. Matt. 1.5-16.

Uncertain what the better way might be,
 For on the right a thorny wood hemmed in
 The narrow trail, and up along a cliff
 A rocky footpath led to airy heights,
 While on the left a shady grove stretched fair⁹⁰ 795
 Through grassy meadows, rich with luscious fruits,
 Where ran a gently sloping road. One chose
 To creep through briars up the lofty crags,
 The other took the plain upon the left;
 One thrust his head into the nearby stars, 800
 The other fell into a miry swamp.
 All have like nature but do not attain
 Like ends, for their resolves take different forms.
 At times it chances that a flock of doves,
 All milky white, fly down from cloudless heights 805
 Into a field where fowlers' traps are laid,
 Twigs smeared with sticky lime and snares bestrewn
 With peas or treacherous meal: some are deceived
 By tempting grains and tangle avid beaks
 In chains of twisted hair, or glue restrains 810
 Their fettered wings, but others not allured
 By love of eating, walk about unharmed
 Upon the barren grass and take good care
 To keep their eyes turned from the artful bait.
 When time comes for returning to the sky, 815
 Some freely seek the heavens and clap their wings
 High in the air, while others captive lie
 And wounded, scan the breezy heights in vain.

 So nature pours on earth from heavenly founts
 Souls of one color, but seductions sweet 820
 There hold them fast, and few ascend again
 To heaven, while many feast on viscous food
 And cannot rise to higher realms above.

90 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.473; 638.

Therefore, the Father kindled Tartarus,
 Made black with molten lead, and trenches dug 825
 In dark Avernus for the streams of hell,
 And in the gulf of Phlegethon bade worms
 To dwell for sin's eternal punishment.⁹¹
 He knew that to our frame His breath gave life,
 And that the soul formed by the eternal lips 830
 Could never die, nor when once stained with sin,
 Could it return to heaven, but must be plunged
 Into the burning depths of hell's abyss.
 To worms and flames and tortures lasting time
 He gave, so that the sufferings might not cease 835
 For the undying soul: torments consume
 And keep alive the substance without end,
 While death compels the groaning wretch to live.
 But far away in realms of paradise
 The Majesty divine has planned rewards 840
 For spirits pure and free from every stain
 That have not on Gomorrha's ruins looked back,
 But with averted gaze have left behind
 The wicked world now hastening to its doom.
 First they are borne with easy flight to heaven 845
 Whence Adam's soul at his creation flowed;
 For since the stress of life cannot hold back
 Its subtle nature, nor impede its course,
 The glowing spirit cleaves the heavy air
 And leaves the sky behind in its disdain 850
 Of earth, the prison house of its exile.
 Then when the soul attains its heavenly home
 Faith takes her to her bosom and consoles
 Her foster child, who tells in plaintive words
 The labors of her sojourn in the flesh. 855
 There, lying on a purple couch, she breathes
 The perfumes of eternal flowers and drinks

91 Cf. Mark 9.43.

Ambrosial dew from roses, while she spurns
 The rich men thirsting in the distant flames
 For streams and showers of heaven, and begging her 860
 To put her dewy finger in their mouths
 And quench the fiery darts with its moist touch.⁹²

You should not wonder that, though far apart,
 Souls damned and just each other clearly see
 And note the portion each has merited, 865
 Across the space that heaven and hell divides.
 He errs who would ascribe to souls the sight
 Of human eyes, which in a glassy film
 Are shrouded, and in which a misty fluid
 A mirror forms that blocks their faltering view. 870
 Do round drops from the eyes of souls gush forth,
 Or are they veiled by lashes thick and rough
 And covered by a screen of shading lids?
 Their sight is keen, their pupil is a fire
 That pierces clouds and darkness penetrates. 875
 No substance black or solid blocks their gaze,
 The murky clouds of night give way to them,
 Before them lies the whole round universe.
 Not only does the soul with vision keen
 Traverse the air, but through the mountains high 880
 To ocean's end and Thule's farthest shores⁹³
 It passes, and to hell it sends its glance.
 All colors night blots out for human eyes
 And in the darkness every shape is lost.
 Do those who have put off their fleshly frames 885
 Lose power of seeing, or mistake their way?
 One shape, one hue of air encloses souls,
 On right or left, as is the due of each.⁹⁴
 The change of time does not reverse their lot,

⁹² Cf. Luke 16.19-26.

⁹³ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.480; *Georgics* 1.30; Seneca, *Medea* 379.

⁹⁴ Cf. Matt. 25.31-41.

Which lasts always, whatever it may be.⁹⁵ 890
 Through all the ages one same course revolves.
 Can there be doubt that souls see things concealed
 From bodily eyes, when often in our sleep
 The spirit beholds vast regions far away
 And darts its glance through fields and stars and seas? 895
 For not before our death does it depart
 From living members, nor resign its home
 Of flesh and blood, withdrawing from the heart
 And robbing it of life, but while it stays
 Within its carnal house, it probes all things 900
 With piercing eyes, directing far the gaze
 Of its ethereal nature no material thing
 Obstructs, and views the world before it spread,
 With black abysses down below the earth.
 The ground between does not impede its sight. 905
 If it should turn its face to stars above,
 Naught in between would block the fiery gaze
 Of the unsleeping soul, though heavy clouds
 And veil of darkness cover all the sky.
 Thus John sees secrets in the future hid⁹⁶ 910
 While in the body still and bound by flesh,
 But freed by grace of sleep from carnal ties,
 He wanders for awhile with piercing eyes
 Through scenes ordained for years and days to come.
 He sees the angels armed in readiness 915
 For the destruction of the world by fire,
 And hears the trumpets sounding at its end.⁹⁷
 He saw all this with soul withdrawn awhile,
 But not yet from the body loosed in death.
 Will not the spirit more clearly see all things 920
 When in the grave its mortal vesture lies?
 We hold that fires of that infernal night

⁹⁵ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.164; 2.49.

⁹⁶ Cf. Apoc. 1.9,10.

⁹⁷ Cf. Apoc. 8.6,7.

In which souls stained by sin forever burn⁹⁸
 The poor man sees from his far-off abode;⁹⁹
 Likewise, the golden crowns won by the just 925
 Are shown across the intervening gulf
 To souls confined in hell's dread prison house.
 His ulcers healed, the soul in paradise
 Beholds the torments of the reprobate,¹⁰⁰
 And each has knowledge of the other's need. 930

O God the Father, Author of our soul,
 O Christ, God from whose mouth the Spirit proceeds,
 One God, Thy law directs and guides my life,
 Thy judgment makes me tremble and grow pale;
 Thy judgment makes me hope for pardon, too, 935
 Unworthy though I be in words and deeds.
 These I confess; forgive and pardon me.
 I merit punishment, but deign, good Judge,
 To cancel what is due and freely grant
 A better lot in answer to my prayers. 940
 When my poor soul has quit this mortal frame
 Made up of sinews, skin, blood, gall, and bones,
 To which, alas, its pampered inmate clings,
 When death has closed these eyes, and cold I lie,
 When vision clear my naked spirit enjoys, 945
 Let it not see one of those demons fierce,
 Relentless, grim, with threatening look and voice,
 Prepared to drag me, stained with many sins,
 Headlong into black yawning caves below,
 There to exact from me all that is due, 950
 To the last farthing, for my wasted life.¹⁰¹
 Thy Father's house has mansions manifold,¹⁰²
 O Christ. I do not ask Thee for a home

98 Cf. Matt. 13.42.

99 Cf. Luke 16.26.

100 Cf. Luke 16.19-26.

101 Cf. Matt. 5.26.

102 Cf. John 14.2.

In regions of the blest; let those chaste throngs
 Dwell there, who scorning things of earth, have sought 955
 Thy riches, and the virgins innocent,
 Who have renounced all carnal appetites.¹⁰³
 Enough that I behold no slave of hell,
 And that Gehenna's flames may not devour
 My soul in its abysmal furnace plunged. 960
 Let fire of deep Avernus swallow me,
 Since only thus may carnal stain be cleansed,
 But let the smoldering flames breathe gentle heat,
 And let their ardor languish and grow cool.
 To others be eternal light and crowns, 965
 To me be penance swift and merciful.

103 Cf. Matt. 19.12.

THE SPIRITUAL COMBAT

(PSYCHOMACHIA)

THE SPIRITUAL COMBAT

Preface

Of true believers first, that faithful patriarch,¹
Abram, of blessed seed in waning years the sire,
Whose name was lengthened by an added syllable,
Called Abram by his father, Abraham by God,²
Who gave in sacrifice the child born past his prime, 5
Thus teaching us, with lively faith in God,
To place upon the altar as a pious gift
The dearest and the only treasure of our heart,
Has counseled us to fight against unholy tribes,
By his example urging us and showing us 10
That we beget no offspring worthy in God's sight,
With Virtue as a mother, till the militant soul,
In battle fierce, has overcome with many blows
The evil monsters reigning in our captive heart.

One day ferocious kings made Lot their prisoner,³ 15
When he in wicked Sodom and Gomorrha dwelt,
The cities that he loved, where though a foreigner,
He had great power by reason of his uncle's fame.
Aroused by heralds of misfortune, Abram hears
His kinsman, taken prisoner in a luckless war, 20
Is held in bondage by his alien conquerors.
Three hundred and eighteen domestic slaves he arms⁴
In quick pursuit against the fleeing enemy,

1 Cf. Gen. 15.6; Gal. 3.6-9.

2 Cf. Gen. 17.5.

3 Cf. Gen. 14.12.

4 Cf. Gen. 14.14.

Encumbered by the treasures and abundant spoils
 That have been taken in their glorious victory. 25
 He, too, unsheathes his sword, inspired by love of God,
 And puts to flight the haughty kings, weighed down by spoils,
 Or mows them down and tramples them beneath his feet.
 He breaks the captives' chains and rescues stolen goods:
 The gold, the maidens, children, jeweled necklaces, 30
 The droves of mares, the urns, the robes, the heifer calves.⁵
 Lot, set at liberty by loosing of his chains,
 Unbends his neck delivered from the galling links.
 The haughty foe now scattered, Abraham returns
 In triumph, bringing back with him his brother's son, 35
 That evil kings might not in cruel slavery hold
 The scion of a family of faithful blood.
 To that heroic chief, fresh from the battlefield,
 The priest presents the holy bread from heaven above,⁶
 The priest of God, likewise a king of might and power 40
 Whose mystic origin from source ineffable
 No author in the sacred scriptures has made known,⁷
 Melchisedech, whose race and ancestry lie hid⁸
 And are not understood except by God alone.
 Then in the form of three angelic visitors⁹ 45
 God at the entrance of the old man's tent appears,
 While Sara is amazed to feel her youth renewed,
 As in her womb she past the usual time conceives,
 And gladdened by an heir, her former laughter rues.¹⁰

 This preface has been given here to symbolize 50
 The likeness that our life should faithfully portray:

5 In Bergman this line reads: *oves, equarum vasa, vestem, buculas*, after one MS. All the others have *greges* instead of *oves*; cf. note in Lavarenne's edition, page 69.

6 Cf. Gen. 14.18.

7 Bergman regards lines 41 and 42 as interpolations and brackets them in his text.

8 Cf. Heb. 7.3.

9 Cf. Gen. 18.1.

10 Cf. Gen. 18.10-14.

Clad in the armor of true hearts,¹¹ we must keep watch,
 And every portion of our body, which is held
 In durance and enslaved to shameful appetites,
 Must be set free by mustering all our inner strength, 55
 For we are rich in servants born within our house,
 If through the mystic symbol we discern the power
 Inherent in three hundred with twice nine subjoined.¹²
 Hereafter Christ himself, who is the true high priest,¹³
 Born of a Father, mighty and unnamable, 60
 Supplying bread from heaven to the victors blest,
 Will enter the humble dwelling of the sinless heart
 And cheer it with a visit from the Trinity;¹⁴
 And then the Holy Spirit will embrace the soul,
 So long denied offspring, and by a marriage chaste, 65
 Will make it fruitful with the seed of heavenly grace,
 And late in life, thus richly dowered, it will fill
 The household of the Father with a worthy heir.

Christ, ever of man's woes compassionate,¹⁵
 Great in the Father's power and in Thy own,
 One power—for by both names one God we praise,
 But not alone, since Thou, O Christ, art God, 5
 Born of the Father—say, our King, what arms
 The soul may wield to drive sin from the heart,
 When our unruly passions rise within,
 And war against the vices tires our spirit,
 What tower of strength can guard our liberty,
 Or battle line oppose the fiends that rage 10
 Within our breast. For not without the aid

¹¹ Cf. Eph. 6.11-17.

¹² According to some commentators, the reference here is to the 318 bishops of the Nicene Council, who confirmed the faith and destroyed heresies. The number 318 (in Greek ΤΙΗ) was also considered as a symbol of Christ, T representing the cross and IH the first two letters of the name Jesus. Cf. P.L. 59.712 ff.

¹³ Cf. Heb. 5.5-10; 6.20; 7.15-22.

¹⁴ An allusion to the Holy Eucharist.

¹⁵ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.56; Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina* 18.261 (PL 61.496).

Of mighty Virtues hast Thou, gracious Lord,
 Exposed to warring Vices Christian souls.
 Thou sendest saving troops to fight within
 The body sore beset, Thou dost array 15
 The spirit with arms to battle evil thoughts,
 To strive for Thee, to overcome for Thee.
 The way of victory will be made clear
 If we the Virtues' very forms may show
 And monstrous Vices that with them contend. 20

Faith first the field of doubtful battle seeks,
 In careless rustic dress, with shoulders bare,
 With flowing locks and naked arms exposed;
 For in her sudden zeal for new conflicts,
 She takes no thought of weapons or of shield, 25
 But trusting her stout heart and unclad limbs,
 She risks the hazards of a savage fray.
 Idolatry soon rallies all her strength
 And dares to come to blows with warlike Faith.
 But rising to full height,¹⁶ Faith fells the foe, 30
 With fillets crowned, and buries in the dust¹⁷
 The mouth filled with the victim's blood; the eyes
 Forced out in death,¹⁸ she tramples under foot;
 The channels of the shattered throat are blocked,
 And weary gasps augment the pangs of death. 35
 The host exults, a thousand martyrs swift,
 Which Faith, their Queen, had launched against the foe.
 And now she crowns her brave allies with flowers,
 And orders them with purple to be clothed.

Next on the grassy plain is Modesty 40
 In gleaming armor, ready for the strife.
 On comes the Sodomite, Voluptuousness

¹⁶ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 12.902.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.* 12.903.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.* 8.260.

With fire-brands girt, and thrusts a torch of pine
 Into her face and modest eyes, intent
 On blinding her with flames and pitchy smoke.¹⁹ 45
 The maid, undaunted, flings a heavy rock
 Against the lustful fury's hand and torch,
 And from her sacred face wards off the brand.²⁰
 Then with her sword the disarmed harlot's throat
 She pierces through; the fiery fumes gush forth 50
 With clots of blood, and fetid breath exhaled
 Defiles the air in all the neighborhood.
 'She has it,'²¹ cries the Queen in triumph; 'This
 Shall be thy end, and prostrate shalt thou lie
 Forever; thou shalt never dare to hurl 55
 Thy flames against God's servants, whose pure hearts
 Are kindled from the torch of Christ alone.
 Have you, O plague of men, your strength renewed,
 Grown warm again with breath of life once quenched,
 Long after Holofernes' severed head 60
 Drenched his Assyrian bed with lustful blood,
 And Judith, scorning his bejeweled couch
 Stopped short his impure passion with the sword,
 And, woman though she was, brought back the prize,
 Avenging me with valor heaven-inspired.²² 65
 This woman, fighting still beneath the Law,
 Had little strength, though of our age a type,²³
 When into earthly frames true power has flowed,
 Through which weak hands cut off a mighty head.
 Now that a Virgin has brought forth a Child, 70
 Where is your power?—That virgin motherhood,
 In which the natural birth of man was changed
 And Power from on high the new flesh formed,²⁴

19 Cf. *ibid.* 9.72-76; Statius, *Thebaid* 11.492-495.

20 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.109.

21 Cf. *ibid.* 12.296.

22 Cf. Judith 13.17-25.

23 Cf. 1 Cor. 10.11.

24 Cf. Luke 1.35.

In which a Maid unwed conceived God, Christ,
 Man from His Mother, but with His Father God. 75
 All flesh is now divine which gave Him birth,
 And by this union, in God's nature shares,²⁵
 The Word made flesh has never ceased to be
 The everlasting Word, though joined to flesh;
 His majesty by union with the flesh 80
 Is not abased, but lifts up wretched men.
 What He was ever, He remains, and now
 Begins to be what He was not; we are
 Not what we were, but born to a better state.
 Gift of Himself does not His Godhead dwarf, 85
 But by it we are raised to heavenly gifts.
 These gifts confound you, O Voluptuousness,
 Nor after Mary can you break my laws.
 You lead to death, you are the door of ruin;²⁶
 Through body's stain, you plunge the soul in hell. 90
 In that black gulf now hide your head, vile scourge;
 Die, harlot; seek the dead; may you be thrust
 Into the depths of hell and darkest night.
 May nether streams roll you in fiery waves,
 And pools of sulphur whirl you in their flood. 95
 No more tempt Christian souls, O chief of fiends,²⁷
 That bodies, henceforth pure, may serve their King.
 Her discourse ended, Modesty rejoiced
 That Voluptuousness lay dead, and in the waves
 Of Jordan's stream, she washed her sword, all stained 100
 With gore that had befouled the shining blade.
 By that baptism in the cleansing flood
 The victress purifies her conquering sword
 Of bloodstain from the enemy's foul throat,
 But not content to sheathe the spotless steel, 105
 Lest hidden rust defile its gleaming face,

²⁵ Cf. 2 Peter 1.4.

²⁶ Cf. Lucretius 1.1112.

²⁷ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.252.

Upon the altar of a Catholic shrine
She offers it, to shine with fadeless light.

Lo, Patience stood with countenance serene,
Unmoved amid the strife and mad uproar, 110
And watched with steady eyes the deadly wounds
Made by the darts, as action she delayed.
From far-off Anger, foaming at the mouth,
Turns on her eyes suffused with blood and gall
And taunts her for her sloth with words and blows.²⁸ 115
Impatient, she lets fly a lethal pike,
Shaking the bearded plumes on her helmet's crown.²⁹
'Take this,' she cries, 'dull witness of our fight,
Receive in your quiet breast this deadly steel,
And wince not, since for you to moan is shame.' 120
She speaks thus, and the shaft hurled through the air
Follows her angry words; then swerving not,
It strikes the stomach with unerring blow,
But springs aside, stopped by the hard cuirass.
For Patience had put on a coat of mail 125
No steel could pierce, a threefold fabric made³⁰
Of iron scales, with leather interlaced.
She stands unruffled, facing all the darts
Upon her rained, and bears the blows unpierced.
Disturbed not by the frenzied monster's lance 130
She waits for Anger's death by her own rage.
Then when the vixen all her strength had spent
In frenzied raving, when the futile shower
Of javelins had worn out her strong right arm,
When flying missiles fell with no effect 135
And useless shafts lay broken on the ground,
She reaches for her sword, and raising it
Above her ear,³¹ she hurls the shining blade

28 Cf. *ibid.* 10.644.

29 Cf. *ibid.* 12.493.

30 Cf. *ibid.* 3.467.

31 Cf. *ibid.* 9.417.

And strikes midway her foe's unbending head.
 The brazen helmet at the blow resounds 140
 And by its hardness blunts the rebounding blade;
 The stubborn metal breaks the smiting steel,
 As it, unyielding, meets the vain assault
 And thwarts unharmed the striker's vicious thrust.
 When Anger sees the fragments of her sword 145
 Roll clattering afar, still holding fast
 The bladeless hilt, distraught she throws away
 The useless ivory, sign of her disgrace,
 And flings afar the painful souvenir,
 As passion urges her to end her life. 150
 From missiles launched in vain, one from the dust
 She then picks up for this nefarious use.
 Into the ground she thrusts the polished wood
 And on the upturned point she stabs herself.
 Then Patience standing over her, cries out: 155
 'With wonted valor we have crushed this Vice
 Without endangering our blood or life;
 This is our rule of war, to quell the hosts
 Of evil by endurance of their blows.
 Foe to itself is rage, and Anger has slain 160
 Herself and dies by her own fiery darts.'
 So speaking, through the battle lines unharmed
 She passes with a great hero; for Job³²
 To his unconquered leader had kept close;
 Grave hitherto and panting from bloodshed, 165
 But smiling now at wounds and ulcers healed,
 He reckons up the thousand battles won,
 His own rewards, his enemy's disgrace.
 The Virtue bids him rest from strife of arms,
 Restore his losses with the captured spoils, 170
 And bring back treasures that would never fade.
 She breaks through legions dense and charging lines,

32 Cf. Job 1-3.

Advancing scatheless through wound-bringing showers.
 To all the Virtues Patience is allied,
 Their brave companion and their only aid; 175
 No Virtue dares to enter combat fierce,
 Unless by Patience she is fortified.

That moment, Pride was galloping about
 Upon a fiery steed, on whose strong flanks
 A heavy lion's skin she had arranged, 180
 That proudly seated on the wild beast's mane,
 She might look down upon the ranks with scorn.
 High on her head her braided hair was piled,³³
 So that the mass enhanced her shining locks
 And made a lofty crown above her brow. 185
 A linen scarf that from her shoulders hung
 Was caught into a knot upon her breast;³⁴
 A veil of gossamer flowed from her neck
 And caught the breezes in its billowing folds.
 No less vainglorious is her restless horse, 190
 His mouth impatient of the curbing bit.³⁵
 He foams with rage and turns from side to side,
 Galled at restraint and pressure of the reins.
 Parading in this style, the proud upstart
 Now overtops both lines and circles round 195
 Upon her horse, as she with threatening look
 Surveys the scant and ill-provided force
 Humility had gathered for the war;
 A queen, indeed, but lacking foreign aid,
 She was not trustful of her own reserves. 200
 As her copartner she had chosen Hope
 Whose wealth is in a realm above the earth.
 When maddened Pride beheld Humility,
 With no display of weapons or supplies,

³³ Cf. Juvenal 6.502; Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum* 2.7 (Vol. 40, this series).

³⁴ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 11.776.

³⁵ Cf. Ovid, *Amores* 1.2.15.

Her voice she poured forth in bitter words:³⁶ 205
 'Does it not shame you, wretches, to attack
 Illustrious leaders with plebeian troops,
 To take the sword against a noble race
 Whose warlike valor conquered ancient wealth
 And gave it power to rule these verdant hills? 210
 An alien strives to banish old-time kings!
 Lo! these are they who would our sceptres take,³⁷
 Who seek to till our cultivated fields,
 To spoil with foreign plow our captured soil
 And dispossess by war a hardy folk! 215
 O foolish mob! All mankind we ensnare
 At birth, while limbs are from the mother warm;
 We spread our power through the new born frame
 And have dominion over infant bones.
 What place was given you in our domain 220
 When realms acquired at birth increased in strength?
 For we and our dominion one same day
 Were born and have grown old with equal years
 Since new-created man from narrow bounds
 Of paradise fled forth into the world, 225
 And Adam clothed himself in skins of beasts,³⁸
 Nude still, had he not followed our precepts.
 What foe from shores unknown now rises up
 To plague us, sluggish, sad, ill-bred, inane,
 Who claims her rights so late, till now exiled? 230
 No doubt, the silly talk will be believed,
 Which bids the wretched hope for future bliss,
 That promised happiness may soothe their sloth
 With idle dreams of better things to come.
 Why does this hope not tempt these raw recruits, 235
 Whom blare of War's fierce trumpet does not rouse,
 And languid virtue makes unfit for strife?

³⁶ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.368.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.* 9.600.

³⁸ Cf. Gen. 3.21.

Is Chastity's chill heart of use in war
 Or Piety's kind work performed by arms?
 O Mars and our known prowess, shame it is 240
 For us to fight against such soldiery,
 Such trifling scum, a band of dancing girls,
 Where mingle Justice and poor Honesty,
 Thirsty Sobriety, pale Fasting, too,
 Wan Purity, her cheeks scarce tinged with blood, 245
 Simplicity exposed to every wound
 And prostrate on the ground, Humility,
 Whose groveling fear betrays her cowardice.
 Like stubble, I will trample under foot
 This helpless band, for with our seasoned swords 250
 We do not deign to strike them, nor to stain
 Our blades in a disgraceful victory.'

Thus shouting, she now spurs her swift war horse,³⁹
 And dashes madly forward with loose reins, 255
 Intent on overthrowing her mild foe
 And trampling her dead body in the dust.
 But quick she falls into a hidden pit,
 Deceit had slyly dug across the field,
 Deceit, one of the Vices most despised,
 A cunning trickster, who foreseeing war, 260
 Had cut blind trenches in the level plain
 So that onrushing troops might be stopped short
 And in a treacherous ditch be swallowed up.⁴⁰
 Then lest the cautious army might detect
 The artful snare, she hid the banks with twigs 265
 Covered with turf to look like level ground.
 The humble queen stood on the other side
 And, unaware, had not drawn near the pit
 Nor set foot on Deceit's malignant trap.
 As Pride dashed up, she fell into the snare 270

³⁹ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.679.

⁴⁰ Cf. Claudian, *In Eutropium* 2.438-439.

And thus revealed the treacherous gulf below.
 Thrown forward on the horse's neck, she falls
 Beneath his broken legs, crushed by his weight,
 But when Humility beholds her foe
 Outdone and lying at the point of death, 275
 She steps up calmly with her head scarce raised
 And moderates her joy with a kindly glance.
 At this, Hope proffers an avenging sword
 And fires her with a love of rightful praise.
 Grasping her adversary by the hair, 280
 She draws her forth, with suppliant face upturned;
 Then bending back her head, she severs it⁴¹
 And holds it up by gory dripping locks.

Thus Hope with sacred words reproves the vice:
 'Cease your grand talk! God shatters arrogance,⁴² 285
 The mighty fall, the braggart proud is crushed.
 Learn to renounce all pride, learn to avoid
 The pit before your feet, all you who boast.
 Those words of Christ are true and known by all:
 The humble are upraised, the proud abased.⁴³ 290
 We have marked how Goliath, brave and strong,
 Fell by a feeble hand: a boy's sling
 Hurled through the air a little stone that pierced
 The giant's forehead with a gaping wound.⁴⁴
 As he, defiant, stark, proud, fierce, and grim, 295
 Exulted in unbridled rage and ire,
 As he paraded with his frightful shield,
 He learned the power of a boy's sport
 And, warrior bold, he fell to youthful years.
 That lad then followed me in valor's dawn, 300
 And to my realm he raised his virile soul,

41 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.536.

42 Cf. 1 Peter 5.5; James 4.6.

43 Cf. Matt. 23.12.

44 Cf. 1 Kings 17.4 ff.

For at the feet of God is kept for me
 A sure abode, and victors freed from guilt
 Seek me when summoned to celestial heights.'
 She spoke, and beating the air with golden wings,⁴⁵ 305
 The maiden flies to heaven. As she goes,
 The Virtues, marveling, long to follow her,
 But they must stay to lead in earthly wars.
 The Vices they attack and wait their crowns.

From western boundaries Sensuality, 310
 A foe long reckless of her name, had come,
 With scented locks, slow voice, and wandering eyes;
 Lost in delights, she lived to pamper flesh,
 To cramp the spirit, perversely to imbibe
 Seductive sweets and enervate the mind. 315
 She then was belching up a night-long feast.
 For lying still at table, she had heard
 The trumpets sound at dawn, and leaving cups,
 With step that slipped in wine and scent, she tread
 On flowers, as drunken she advanced to war. 320
 Yet not on foot, but in a chariot borne,
 She won the hearts of her admiring foes.
 O novel clash of arms! No arrow flies
 From her bowstring, no hissing lance darts forth
 From twisted thong, no threatening sword she wields, 325
 But flings in sport rose leaves and violets
 And scatters flowers on the enemy's lines.
 The Virtues charmed, with her seductive breath
 She breathes a poison through their weakened frames;⁴⁶
 The scent subdues their lips, their hearts, and arms, 330
 And softens iron muscles robbed of strength.
 Disheartened, they lay down their javelins,
 Their hands now basely limp, as stupefied,
 They marvel at the chariot all agleam

⁴⁵ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.14; Tibullus 4.1.209.

⁴⁶ Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 4.236; *Aeneid* 8.390.

With gems of various hues, and longing gaze 335
 At tinkling gilded reins, at axle wrought
 Of solid gold, and shining round of spokes
 Of silver, which the wheel's encircling rim
 Embraces with its orb of amber pale.
 And now the whole cohort, with standards turned, 340
 Was yearning to submit with willing hearts
 To Sensuality, to bear the rule,
 Of that base mistress and the brothel's law.
 That Virtue brave, Sobriety, bemoaned
 This crime: her friends withdrawing on the right, 345
 A band unconquered lost without bloodshed.
 The standard of the cross she had advanced
 That noble leader fixes in the ground
 And rallies her inconstant troops with words
 Of mingled pleading and severe reproach: 350

'What madness touches your disordered minds?
 Where do you rush?⁴⁷ To whom do you submit?
 What chains do you, for shame, desire to wear
 On warlike arms, these yellow wreaths entwined
 With lilies fair, these crowns of dark red flowers? 355
 Are you resolved to yield to bonds like these
 Your hands inured to war, bind thus your arms;
 To let the golden coif, with yellow band
 Restraining virile locks, drink up the oil,
 When once the sign upon your brows was traced, 360
 A royal unction and eternal chrism;
 To sweep your footprints with a trailing robe,⁴⁸
 To clothe your limbs with flowing gowns of silk,
 When once Faith wove for you with skillful hand
 A lasting tunic, giving to cleansed hearts, 365
 Through her reborn, a shield impervious;
 Then to nocturnal feasts, where tankards spill

⁴⁷ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 12.313.

⁴⁸ Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 3.59.

Their foaming wastes of wine, while ladles drip
 On boards, where couches are with liquor wet
 And carvings are still moist with ancient dew? 370
 Do you forget the thirst in desert lands,
 The spring vouchsafed your fathers from the rock,
 Which mystic rod drew forth from sundered stone?⁴⁹
 Did not angelic food upon the tents
 Of your ancestors fall,⁵⁰ of which more blessed 375
 The people from Christ's body now partake?⁵¹
 You, at this banquet fed, indulgence drags
 To Sensuality's vile drunken den,
 And soldier neither wrath nor heathen gods
 Could force to yield, a dancing girl has swayed! 380
 Stand, I pray, mindful of yourselves and Christ.
 Think of your race, your fame, your God and King,
 Your Lord. You, Juda's noble seed, have come
 From line of mighty princes reaching down
 To God's own Mother through whom He was Man. 385
 Let holy David's fame your noble spirits rouse,
 One in unceasing tasks of war engaged.
 Let Samuel rouse you, who forbids that spoils
 From a rich foe be touched, nor lets the king
 Uncircumcised live on, lest he might force 390
 The peaceful victor to renew the war.⁵²
 He thinks it crime to spare the captive king,
 But you wish to be vanquished and succumb.
 Repent, if you have any fear of God,
 That you have followed this temptation sweet; 395
 If you repent, it is no deadly sin.
 For Jonathan repented that he broke
 The solemn fast by tasting honey smeared
 Upon his rod, when charmed by his desire

49 Cf. Exod. 17.3-6.

50 Cf. Exod. 16.14,15.

51 The Holy Eucharist, of which the manna was a type.

52 Cf. 1 Kings 15.33.

Of power, the youth transgressed the sacred law.⁵³ 400
 Since he repented, we weep not his lot,
 And no harsh sentence stained his father's ax.
 Lo, I, Sobriety, if you join me,
 Will now to all the Virtues show a way
 For Sensuality and her great train 405
 To suffer punishment from Christ the Judge.'

So speaking, she uplifts a crucifix
 And thrusts the holy wood against the reins
 Of the raging team. The savage steeds take fright
 At its extended arms and gleaming crest, 410
 And in blind fear they rush in headlong flight
 Adown the precipice. The charioteer
 In vain pulls in the reins and borne along,
 She soils her hair with dust. Thrown out, she falls
 Beneath entangling wheels and stops the car, 415
 Her mangled body serving as the brake.
 Sobriety hurls from the cliff a stone
 And gives the death-blow to her lying there.
 As chance gave to the leader this strong bolt,
 Who bears no weapons but her warlike sign,⁵⁴ 420
 Chance drives the stone to crush the breathing mouth
 And with the hollow palate mix the lips.
 The teeth within are loosened, and the tongue
 All mangled, fills the throat with clots of blood.
 The throat rebels at this unwonted food 425
 And then spews up the lumps of broken bones.
 'Drink now your blood after your many cups,'
 The maiden chides, 'let this be your grim fare
 In place of all the sweets of your past life.
 Let death's unsavory taste and this vile draught 430
 Turn all the pleasures of your life to gall.'

⁵³ Cf. 1 Kings 14.24 ff.

⁵⁴ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.683.

Then at their leader's death, the scattered line
 Atremble flees. First, Jest and Petulance
 Their cymbals throw away, for with such arms
 They played at war, intending wounds with noise. 435
 Love turns his back in flight, and pale with fear,
 He leaves behind his poisoned darts, his bow
 And quiver from his shoulders falling down.
 Vainglorious Pomp of her proud flowing robe
 Is stripped; the wreaths of Charm are torn away 440
 And from her neck and head the gold is loosed,
 While hostile Discord scatters all her gems.
 Through thorny briers Pleasure freely goes
 With feet all bruised, because a greater power
 Makes her endure the bitter flight, and fear 445
 Steels tender soles to bear the torturing way.
 Wherever the column turns its frightened course⁵⁵
 Lie objects lost, a hairpin, ribbons, bands,
 A brooch, veil, bodice, necklace, diadem.
 Sobriety, with her whole army, scorns 450
 These spoils and tramples these cursed stumbling blocks
 Beneath her virtuous feet, nor does she gaze
 Upon this tempting plunder with delight.

They say that Avarice, clothed in ample robe,
 Seized all of worth that Sensuality 455
 Had left behind, gazing with open mouth
 Upon the pretty toys and picking up
 The golden fragments in the heaps of sand.
 Not satisfied with pockets full, she joys
 To cram with sordid gain her money-bags, 460
 Which in her robe she hides with her left hand,
 While with the right she gathers up the spoils
 And fills her brazen claws with filthy loot.
 With her go as companions diverse fiends,
 Care, Hunger, Fear, Distress, Pallor, and Fraud, 465

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.* 11.762.

Intrigue, Deceit, Craft, Sleeplessness, and Greed.⁵⁶
 And all the while, like ravening wolves, the Crimes,
 Fed on the sable milk of Avarice,
 Go prowling round the wide, unbroken plain.
 Then if a soldier sees his brother's helm 470
 Agleam with tawny gems, he does not fear
 To draw his sword and to strike off his head
 That he may snatch the jewels from the crown.
 And if a son sees lying on the field
 His father's body, he strips off as spoils 475
 The bright gold-studded belt and bloody arms:
 Thus civil strife despoils its next of kin,
 Unsated greed its dear ones does not spare,
 And impious hunger robs its own offspring.

Such carnage Avarice, conqueror of the world, 480
 Spread through the nations,⁵⁷ laying thousands low
 By various wounds: one with his eyes gouged out,
 And blinded, she permits, as in dark night,
 To wander over many stumbling blocks
 And never test the dangers with a staff. 485
 Another through his sight she lures by show
 Of something fair, and as he covets it,
 He is entrapped, unheeding, by her stroke
 And winces at the sword-thrust in his heart.
 A multitude she drives to open fires, 490
 Not suffering them to shun the seething gold,
 Which, doomed to burn with it, the swindler seeks.
 The human race, all mortals she ensnares
 And leads to ruin, nor is there on the earth
 A vice more fierce, one that involves all men 495
 In such bloodshed, condemning them to hell.
 With her own hand, if it can be believed,⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.* 6.274-281.

⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.* 10.602.

⁵⁸ Cf. *ibid.* 6.173.

She dared to tempt the very priests of God,
 The leaders in the foremost line,⁵⁹ who fought
 And cheered the Virtues with loud trumpet blasts. 500
 She might have stained her sword in their chaste blood
 Had not the warrior, Reason, true comrade
 Of Levi's sons, before them raised her shield
 And from them warded off the foe's onslaught.
 They stand with help of Reason safe, they stand 505
 Immune from every storm and brave of heart;
 A few the spear of Avarice slightly grazed
 With skin-deep wounds. The foul plague was amazed
 To see her darts rebound from their pure throats,
 And groaning, she begins with frenzied words: 510
 'We lose the fight, alas, our might has lost
 Its wonted strength, our power to hurt grows weak,
 Which once was wont to pierce the hearts of men
 With force invincible; for man has not
 So iron a nature that he can resist 515
 Our bronze or be indifferent to our gold.
 We have led every heart to ruin;⁶⁰ the kind,
 Rough, hard, learned and unlearned, the dull, the wise,
 Pure and impure, have been within our grasp.
 Whatever Styx hides in its floods, alone 520
 We carried off, to us hell owes the hordes
 Held in its depths; what ages spin is ours,
 What earth confounds, its mad turmoil, is ours.
 How comes it that our well-known glory wanes,
 And fortune ridicules our useless arms? 525
 The yellow image on the gleaming coin
 Is worthless to the followers of Christ,
 Money and wealth are paltry in their sight.
 Why these sophistic airs? Did we not gain
 A victory over Iscariot, one great⁶¹ 530

59 Cf. *ibid.* 7.531.

60 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 3.480.

61 Cf. Matt. 26.14,15.

Among the friends of God, His guest at meat,
 When, false, he put his hand into the dish,⁶²
 And fell upon our weapon, having bought
 A noxious field with price of his Friend's blood,
 Doomed to atonement by a broken neck?⁶³ 535
 And Jericho had seen in her own ruin
 Our hand's control, when conquering Achan fell.⁶⁴
 Renowned for bloodshed, proud of leveling walls,
 He fell a victim to the enemy's gold
 When from the dust he gleaned the stuff accurst 540
 And snatched the mournful plunder from the ruins.
 His tribe did not avail, nor his descent
 From Juda, founder of the race of Christ⁶⁵
 And patriarch blessed in his noble scion.
 Let those who imitate his race accept 545
 A similar form of death and punishment.
 Why do I hesitate to circumvent
 The stock of Juda or of Aaron high⁶⁶
 Since I am not a match for them in war?
 What matter whether we win by arms or fraud? 550
 With these words she puts off her fiendish look
 And frightful arms, and puts on honest mien:⁶⁷
 She now becomes a Virtue, stern of face
 And dress,⁶⁸ and called Frugality, who loves
 To pinch and save, as though she would seize nought 555
 And had a right to praise for what she feigned.
 Bellona⁶⁹ clothes herself in similar garb,
 As thrifty Virtue, not a greedy plague,
 And with a veil of piety she hides
 Her snaky locks, that the white cloak may mask 560

62 Cf. Mark 14.20.

63 Cf. Acts 1.18.

64 Cf. Jos. 7.1,21,25.

65 Cf. Jos. 7.16.

66 Cf. Num. 3.6-10.

67 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.415-416.

68 Cf. Juvenal 14.109-111.

69 The Roman war-goddess.

Her rage and fury, and she may excuse
 Under the name of love of her offspring
 Her theft and pillage and rapacity.
 In such deceptive likenesses she blinds
 The hearts of men, who heed the deadly fiend⁷⁰ 565
 And, deeming her a Virtue, are ensnared
 As easy victims in the Fury's toils.
 Their leaders dazed, their battle lines confused,
 The Virtues wavered, by the monster's form
 Misled and doubtful whether she was friend 570
 Or foe. The deadly creature's double shape
 Confounds their sight and makes them hesitate,
 When Mercy suddenly dashes on the field⁷¹
 And wroth, takes up the fight in their behalf,
 Last in the battle line, but destined soon, 575
 Alone, to terminate the dreadful war.
 From off her shoulders every weight was cast,
 As quick she moved, of cloak and pack relieved,⁷²
 Once cramped by riches and hard money bags,
 But freed by kindly pity on the poor, 580
 Whom she had aided with ancestral wealth.
 Rich now in faith, she eyed her empty purse
 And counted up her lasting wealth and gain.⁷³
 At sight of that brave Virtue, Avarice quaked,
 And as one paralyzed, she stood unmoved 585
 And sure of death.⁷⁴ For by what trickery
 Could she entice one who had spurned the world
 To love again the gold she had despised?
 The Virtue falls upon the trembling Vice
 With might of clutching arms and, strangling her, 590
 She breaks her dry and bloodless throat: the arms,
 Locked underneath her chin, compress her jaws

70 Cf. Claudian, *De raptu Pros.* 1.37.

71 Cf. Claudian, *In Eutropium* 2.549-550.

72 Cf. Vergil, *Eclogues* 9.65.

73 Cf. Matt. 19.21,29.

74 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.564.

And take away her life without a wound,
 For when the channel of her breath is blocked,
 She suffers death enclosed within her veins. 595
 With knee and foot pressed on the struggling Vice,
 The victor stabs her ribs and heaving sides,⁷⁵
 Then from the body takes away the spoils:
 Bits of unpolished gold not yet refined
 In fiery forges, purses eaten up 600
 By gnawing worms, coins green with rust,
 Things hoarded long, she to the needy gives,
 And with the captured booty helps the poor.
 Then glancing round with joyful countenance,
 She fervently exhorts the mighty host: 605
 'Cease fighting, ye upright, and lay aside
 Your arms. The cause of all our woe lies slain.⁷⁶
 With lust for gain now dead, the saints may rest.
 To wish for nothing more than need demands
 Is rest supreme, with simple food and dress 610
 To feed and clothe our bodies and to seek
 No more than is prescribed by nature's wants.
 When going on a journey, take no purse,⁷⁷
 Nor of a second tunic think, and be
 Not anxious for the morrow,⁷⁸ lest for food 615
 The belly lack. Our daily bread returns
 With every sun. Does any bird take thought
 Of tomorrow, certain to be fed by God?⁷⁹
 The fowls of little value trust that food
 Will fail not, sparrows for a farthing sold,⁸⁰ 620
 Have certain faith that God will care for them.
 Dost thou, God's care and image of His Christ,
 Fear thy Creator will abandon thee?

75 Cf. *ibid.* 9.431.

76 Cf. *ibid.* 6.93; 11.480.

77 Cf. Matt. 10.10; Mark 6.8,9; Luke 9.3; 22.35.

78 Cf. Matt. 6.34.

79 Cf. Matt. 6.26.

80 Cf. Matt. 10.29.

Fear not, O men! He who gives life, gives food.
 Seek the light-bringing food of heavenly lore, 625
 Which fosters hope of everlasting life,⁸¹
 Unmindful of the body: He who made
 Our frame will furnish food for all our needs.'

Care vanished at these words,⁸² Fear, Toil, and Rage,
 And Crime and Fraud that heavenly Faith denies 630
 Were driven from the land. Then kindly Peace,
 The foe now put to flight, drives War away;
 Fear is dispelled and fighting gear unclasped.
 The flowing robes fall to the warriors' feet,⁸³
 And peaceful modesty checks their rapid steps. 635
 The trumpets now are silent, swords are sheathed,
 The dust subsides upon the field, the day
 Returns with bright and cloudless face, and light
 From heaven shines resplendent to the view.
 The squadrons, joyful at the battle's end, 640
 Saw that the Thunderer smiled upon their ranks,
 That Christ, rejoicing in their victory,
 Was opening up for them His Father's home.⁸⁴
 Concord gives signal to bear back to camp
 The conquering eagles⁸⁵ and take to their tents. 645
 Never did troops make such a splendid show
 As when in double lines she led them forth,
 The section of footsoldiers chanting psalms,
 And that of mounted warriors singing hymns.
 So conquering Israel sang when looking back⁸⁶ 650
 Upon the yawning gulf of the rabid sea,
 As now they trod dry-foot the farther shore,
 And as the mass of water grazed their heels

81 Cf. Matt. 6.23.

82 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.382.

83 Cf. *ibid.* 1.404.

84 Cf. Apoc. 3.21.

85 Cf. Lucan 5.238.

86 Cf. Exod. 15.1-19.

And in its ebbing flood engulfed the host
 Of swarthy dwellers on the Nile, while fish 655
 Now swam again in flooded hollow bays,
 And headlong billows overspread the sands.
 God's people their melodious timbrels beat⁸⁷
 To celebrate the great and wondrous work
 Of the Omnipotent, when having cut 660
 The waves and stayed the winds, He raised up banks
 Of water and checked the thronging hordes.
 So when the race of Vices was subdued,
 The Virtues sang melodious hymns and psalms.

The band had reached the portals of the camp⁸⁸ 665
 With narrow access through the double doors.
 Here rises an unforeseen enemy,
 A cunning Vice that strikes at placid Peace
 And mars her triumph with a sudden blow.
 Concord, surrounded by the close-packed throng, 670
 When safe within the walls she has set foot,
 Receives in her left side a treacherous wound
 Made by a lurking Vice, although the mail
 She wore upon her body, with its chains
 Of iron, repelled the dart, nor did the links, 675
 Joined firmly with their rigid knots, permit
 The steel to penetrate deep in the flesh.
 And yet an open seam allowed the sword
 To pass through with a trivial puncture, where
 The last scale of the cuirass joined the belt. 680
 A crafty warrior of the losing side
 Struck this blow, with the victors off their guard.
 For when the Vices had been overthrown,
 Discord our ranks had entered as a friend.
 Far off amid the tumult of the field 685
 Lay her torn robe and scourge of many snakes,

⁸⁷ Cf. *Exod.* 15.21.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Vergil, Aeneid* 6.45.

While she herself, with crown of olive leaves
 Responded joyfully to the festive choir.⁸⁹
 Beneath her cloak a dagger she concealed
 To strike thee, Concord, greatest Virtue, thee 690
 Of all the band; but she was not allowed
 To pierce the vitals of thy sacred frame,
 Only to wound the skin with slightest touch.⁹⁰
 'What is this?' cries the Virtue thus disturbed.
 'What hostile hand is hidden here, which hurts 695
 Our triumph and in midst of joy strikes?
 What use to have subdued the Passions fierce
 And brought the holy back, with Vices dead,
 If under Peace a Virtue falls?' The ranks
 Turned mournful eyes upon the blood that stained⁹¹ 700
 Her coat of mail. Then fear betrays the foe
 As she stands nigh; for pallid cheeks reveal
 Her guilty knowledge of the daring deed,
 And hand and face quail at discovery.
 Round her the Virtues throng with swords unsheathed⁹² 705
 And breathless ask her race, her name, her home,
 And faith, what God she venerates and by
 What nation sent. She pale with fear replies:
 'Discord is my first name and Heresy
 My second. God to me is various, 710
 Now lesser or now greater, now twofold,
 Now simple; when I scoff at his divinity,
 He is a phantom or the soul within.
 My teacher is Belial, my home the world.'
 No longer Faith, the Virtues' queen, could bear⁹³ 715
 This blasphemy, but checked the monster's words
 And closed the vocal passage with her spear,
 Transfixing the foul tongue with its firm point.

89 Cf. *ibid.* 8.702-703.

90 Cf. *ibid.* 1.737.

91 Cf. *ibid.* 11.812.

92 Cf. *ibid.* 12.662-663.

93 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.487.

Hands without number rend the deadly beast;
 Each one takes for herself a piece to fling 720
 Into the air, or give to dogs, or throw
 To carrion crows, or into sewers cast,⁹⁴
 Or to the monsters of the sea consign.
 The whole corpse torn to bits is thrown to beasts;
 Thus Heresy perishes, all her members rent.⁹⁵ 725

Now that prosperity has been restored,
 Now that the people are at peace again
 And all the Virtues, safe within the walls,
 Can now in leisure find relief from care,⁹⁶
 A rostrum is constructed on a hill 730
 In middle of the camp, and this high place
 Serves as a watchtower, whence the eye may view
 Afar on every side what lies below.
 True Faith and, likewise, Concord, sisters vowed
 In sacred kinship for the love of Christ, 735
 Ascend the height,⁹⁷ and then the holy pair,
 Dear to each other and with equal power,
 Together take their stand upon the stage⁹⁸
 And bid the populous throng to gather round.
 From every corner of the camp they rush; 740
 No portion of the Soul keeps out of sight,
 Hiding itself in shameful idleness
 In some retreat of flesh; with flaps drawn back,
 All tents are open that no inmate may
 Lie snoring loudly in secluded ease. 745
 With ears intent, the concourse waits to hear
 Why Concord calls the victors after war,
 Or what rule Faith may to the Virtues give.

⁹⁴ Cf. Columella 10.85.

⁹⁵ Cf. Juvenal 3.259-260.

⁹⁶ In lines 727-730, Bergman accepts the version found in Ms.A and others. In this translation the variant version, quoted in Bergman's note, page 203, and accepted by Thomson, is followed.

⁹⁷ Cf. Claudian, *In Eutropium* 1.311.

⁹⁸ Cf. Claudian, *De bello Gildonico* 425.

With these words, Concord first breaks forth in speech:
 'Abundant glory now has come to you, 750
 O faithful children of the Father and
 Of Christ the Lord. You have in fierce conflict
 Wiped out the cruel demons that beset
 With fire and sword the city of the saints.⁹⁹
 The nation's peace rests on benevolence 755
 In field and town. A state divided falls,¹⁰⁰
 And lack of peace within brings war without.
 Take care, my warriors, lest dissensions rise¹⁰¹
 Within our souls, lest heresy spring up
 From hidden discords, for a divided will 760
 A fickle heart confounds with hostile views.
 May love unite our minds, one aim inspire
 Our lives: for without union nought is strong.
 As Jesus reconciled mankind to God
 And to His Father joined our mortal frame, 765
 That flesh might not be parted from the Spirit,
 And that God might be both, so let one mind
 Unite us all in body and in soul.
 Peace crowns the Virtue's work,¹⁰² peace is the fruit
 Of toil, reward for war and peril braved. 770
 In peace stars shine, in peace the earth stands fast.
 Without peace nought is pleasing unto God.
 No gift brought to the altar is approved,¹⁰³
 If hate of brother dwells within thy heart,
 And if for Christ a martyr thou shouldst leap 775
 Into the flames¹⁰⁴ whilst thou an unkind wish
 Dost keep, to have for Jesus given thy life
 Will profit not, for peace is merit's ground:
 It is not proud, a brother envies not,¹⁰⁵

99 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.232.

100 Cf. Matt. 12.25.

101 Cf. 1 Cor. 1.10.

102 Cf. Claudian, *Laus Serenae* 12.

103 Cf. Matt. 5.24.

104 Cf. 1 Cor. 13.3.

105 Cf. 1 Cor 13.4-8.

Endures all things with calm, believes all things, 780
 It never grieves at wrongs, forgives affronts,
 It joys to pardon ere the end of day¹⁰⁶
 And worries lest the sun leave wrath behind.
 He who would offer holocausts to God
 Let him first offer peace; no sacrifice 785
 To Christ is sweeter; with its fragrance pure
 This gift alone is pleasing in His sight.
 God gives the snow-white doves skill to discern¹⁰⁷
 The feathered serpent in his peaceful dress
 Of downy plumage, when with harmless birds 790
 He mingles; so the wolf with bloody jaws
 In clothing of a sheep conceals himself¹⁰⁸
 When he spreads deadly ruin among the lambs.
 Plotinus and Arius thus hide themselves,¹⁰⁹
 Wolves wild and fierce.¹¹⁰ Our recent jeopardy 795
 And bloodshed, though skin-deep, reveal the power
 Of a furtive hand.' Stunned by the bitter blow,¹¹¹
 The whole array of Virtues gave a groan.
 Then noble Faith advanced and spoke these words:
 'In this blest hour, let mourning cease. Concord 800
 Was hurt, but Faith has been upheld. With Faith
 Concord stands safe and laughs at petty wounds.¹¹²
 She is my shield, her rescue bans all grief.
 After this war one work remains for us,
 O leaders, that which Solomon achieved, 805
 The peaceful scion and the unarmed heir¹¹³
 Of a warlike realm, whose father's weary hand
 Was sullied by the ardent blood of kings.
 The blood effaced, a temple is upraised

106 Cf. Eph. 4.26.

107 Cf. Matt. 10.16.

108 Cf. Matt. 7.15.

109 Heretics of the fourth century.

110 Cf. Acts 20.29.

111 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 5.700.112 Cf. *ibid.* 9.262.

113 Cf. 3 Kings 5.3-5.

And golden altar, house sublime of Christ.¹¹⁴ 810
 Jerusalem then by her temple crowned,
 Received her God, now that the wandering ark
 Upon the marble altar found repose.¹¹⁵
 In our camp let a sacred temple rise,
 That God may in its sanctuary dwell. 815
 What profits it to have repelled the hosts
 Of earth-born Vices, if the Son of Man,
 From heaven descending, enters the body cleansed,
 But unadorned and not a temple fair?
 Thus far we have engaged in fierce conflict: 820
 Now let white-vestured Peace perform her tasks,
 And youth unarmed build up a sacred house.'

So speaking, with her friend Concord, the queen¹¹⁶
 Descended and began to measure out
 The temple on foundations newly laid. 825
 Her golden reed surveys the distances,¹¹⁷
 That all four sides may square and joints be straight
 And no uneven corner may destroy
 The graceful plan by lack of symmetry.
 One square lies on the side of dawn lit up 830
 By triple doors; three doors lead to the south;¹¹⁸
 Three entrances are offered on the west,
 And toward the north the lofty hall presents
 As many more.¹¹⁹ No building stone is there;
 A solid gem, in which an opening 835
 Has been cut, frames the door with gleaming arch,
 And one stone forms the entrance vestibule.
 Inscribed in gold on top of these doorways,
 The names, twice six, of the apostles shine.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Cf. 3 Kings 6.22.

¹¹⁵ Cf. 3 Kings 8.6.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.790; 6.628.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Apoc. 21.15-17.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Apoc. 21.13.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.262.

¹²⁰ Cf. Apoc. 21.14.

The Spirit by these scrolls attracts the soul 840
 And fills the heart with holy sentiments;
 It enters through three doors this inner shrine
 In each of the four ages of man's life
 And gilds the holy place with chaste desires;
 Whether it be in childhood's early dawn, 845
 The heat of ardent youth, the full sunlight
 Of man's maturity, or wintry chill
 Of feeble age, three names present themselves
 On each of the four sides, which by the King
 Have been inscribed to His disciples twelve. 850
 Nay more, an equal number of rich gems
 Set in the walls, shine brightly, and the light
 Pours forth from their clear depths in living hues.
 A chrysolite ingrained with gold is set¹²¹
 Between a sapphire and a beryl green, 855
 And their joint glow gives rise to varied charms.
 Here a chalcedony is steeped with light
 From neighboring hyacinth; for that dark stone
 Shone nearby with its limpid purple depths.
 The amethyst imbues the sardony, 860
 The jasper and topaz, the sardius.
 Among these, emeralds shine like meadows green,
 And verdant light flows forth in billowing waves.
 Thou too, bright chrysoprase, dost gild this shrine,
 And thy star joins the other glittering stones. 865
 The heavy cables of the pulley creaked
 As to the heights it raised the massive gems.
 Within the shrine a lofty hall is built
 Upheld by seven pillars, crystal clear,¹²²
 Whose capitals are topped with milk-white stone 870
 Cut into cones, with lower edge upturned
 And curved in likeness of a shell, a pearl
 Which Faith had for a thousand talents bought,

121 Cf. Apoc. 21.19,20.

122 Cf. Prov. 9.1; Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.637.

Derived from auction of her property.¹²³
 Here Wisdom dwells, and from a lofty throne, 875
 Directs the government of all the realm,
 And issues laws for saving all mankind.
 She holds a sceptre not by artist made,
 But living rod that severed from the tree,¹²⁴
 Though nurtured by no sap from earthly soil, 880
 Still puts forth verdant leaves and twines
 With blood-red roses lilies white and fair
 That never bend their heads on shriveled stems.
 This sceptre was foreshadowed by the rod¹²⁵
 Of Aaron, which from lifeless bark put forth 885
 A flower of tender beauty full of hope
 And new shoots sprouting from the arid branch.¹²⁶

Eternal thanks we give to Thee, O Christ,
 Most gentle Teacher, and with pious lips
 We sing Thy praise¹²⁷—for sin has stained our hearts. 890
 Thou hast willed us to know the hidden foes
 Within the body and the soul's grim strife.
 Conflicting passions in our heart, we know,
 Wage ceaseless wars with outcomes various:
 Our souls now grow in goodness, and again 895
 When virtues are subdued, they are enslaved
 And give themselves to shameful sins, which lead
 To loss of their salvation and their ruin.
 How often have we felt our soul grow warm¹²⁸
 With love of God, when vices were repulsed; 900
 How often felt our hearts grow cold and yield
 To sin after this joy! Within our frame
 Wars rage,¹²⁹ and human nature rises up

123 Cf. Matt. 13.45,46.

124 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 12.208.

125 Cf. *ibid.* 3.286.

126 Cf. Num. 17.8; Heb. 9.4.

127 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.118.

128 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.641.

129 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.86; Statius, *Thebaid* 4.601; 6.457.

In fierce revolt,¹³⁰ for flesh formed of the mire
 Weighs heavy on the spirit; but the pure spirit, 905
 Formed by the breath of God, rebels inside
 Its prison, and the body's foulness spurns:
 Diverse in spirit, light with darkness wars,¹³¹
 And our two natures are at variance,
 Till Christ our God is present with His grace 910
 And all the jewels of the virtues sets
 In shrine made pure; then where sin reigned He builds
 His temple with its gilded halls, and weaves
 From Valor proved adornments for the soul
 Where Wisdom will always delight to reign. 915

¹³⁰ Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 2.459; Statius, *Thebaid* 11.100.

¹³¹ Cf. Gal. 5.17.

AGAINST SYMMACHUS

(CONTRA SYMMACHUM)

Book One

AGAINST SYMMACHUS

Book One

Preface

Paul, the herald of God, who with his holy pen
First subdued the untamed hearts of the gentile tribes,
Sowing knowledge of Christ with his precepts benign
Over barbarous lands following savage ways,
That uncivilized folk heathenish rites might spurn 5
And arrive at a firm knowledge of one true God,
Of old happened to be driven by tempest dark
Through a turbulent sea in an unstable ship
And braved furious winds threatening to sink the craft.¹
When the hand of the Lord calmed the cerulean flood,² 10
Stilling the boisterous waves, bidding them sink to rest,
Into harbor the ship glided while still afloat,
And secure on the wet shore disembarked the crew
All benumbed by the cold drizzle of freezing rain.³
Then, still shivering, they hastily gathered twigs, 15
Arid branches from brush nigh to the sandy beach,
Whence they kindled a fire blazing up rapidly;
As each piled on the flames bundles of fagots dry,
He took heart from the warmth shed from the glowing pyre.
While Paul busied himself gathering the shriveled boughs⁴ 20
And then piling them high upon the blazing heap,
His hand, heedless, he thrust into the pile of wood,

1 Cf. Acts 27, 28.

2 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.528.

3 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 3.279.

4 Cf. Acts 28.2-6.

Where a slumbering asp, lying benumbed with cold,
 Had encircled the twigs with its entwining coils.
 When the viper grew warm close to the smoking fire⁵ 25
 And its neck was relaxed, which had been stiff with frost,
 Fierce it darted its head turning about with ease,
 And soon struck at the saint's hand with ferocious teeth.
 Paul was stricken by fear when he upraised the snake,
 Clinging fast to his hand wounded by mordant fangs. 30
 Others cried out in awe, thinking the deadly bane
 Was already diffused through the now livid skin.
 The Apostle did not quail at the sudden blow
 But undaunted he stood facing the peril grim.
 He then raising his eyes, looked up to heaven above,⁶ 35
 Softly murmuring Christ's name in his inmost heart,⁷
 And the serpent shook off, tossing it far away.
 Now the reptile cast off, beating the frigid air,
 Opened its vicious mouth and soon released its fangs.
 Quick the virulent blood flowed from the saint's right hand, 40
 As though never a wound harrowed the smarting flesh,
 And the viperous fluid dried up and disappeared.
 The Apostle's strong thrust sent the nefarious snake
 Whirling into the fire, where it was burned to death.

Today, after the fierce tempests of raging seas, 45
 Whereon Wisdom's frail bark tottered in savage winds
 When she drifted with fear under ungodly kings
 And could scarcely advance even with hoisted sails,
 When by storms of the world passengers were distressed,
 As through turbulent waves floated the stricken craft, 50
 Again has her wise law suffered a bitter wound.
 For a viper had been shrouded in secrecy
 And its virulent head hitherto had not raised,
 Content to be inclosed deep in its hidden lair

⁵ Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.173-175.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.* 5.503.

⁷ Cf. *ibid.* 2.203.

And a silence profound keep in its dark retreat. 55
 While Impiety lay crouched in this hiding place,
 Stiff and sluggish with cold, forthwith its ire was roused,
 And embittered by hate, Justice's right hand it struck.
 Ah, how all but in vain has been the voyage rough
 Of the Catholic bark, guided by holy writ, 60
 Which by Paul was sent forth into the various lands!
 Scarce had she come to rest, safe in a tranquil port,
 After victories won over a thousand storms,
 Scarce had anchors been made fast with the mooring ropes
 And the travelers debarked, sure on the solid ground, 65
 When the dangerous plague suddenly showed its head.
 While they kindled hot fires thus to abate the cold
 And to ease their fatigue, while in the flames they burned
 The abortive offshoots, branches unsound and bare
 From the vine of the Faith, heavy and overgrown, 70
 That the mass of wild twigs, dense and disorderly,
 Might be rid of the foul growth of idolatry,
 The caress of the warmth brought the vile pest to life.
 Then the serpent began creeping around again,
 Proudly shaking its head, subtle in eloquence, 75
 But an obdurate hand, reckless of threatened wound,⁸
 Rendered empty and null all its impassioned words,⁹
 And its venomous spirit flowed from its mouth in vain,
 Turned aside by the shield borne by the Christian souls.

 O Savior of the race founded by Romulus, 80
 Who Thy pardoning grace grantest to fallen men,
 Thou who savest mankind as Thy creation dear
 And with merciful hand quickly dost raise it up,
 Have compassion, I pray, now if it be Thy will,
 On this man who has plunged into a deep abyss. 85
 He unknowingly breathes haughty impiety
 And in ignorance clings firmly to errors false.

⁸ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 11.639; Statius, *Thebaid* 9.872.

⁹ Reference to the oratorical powers of Symmachus.

I beg Thee to ordain that he shall not be hurled
Headlong into the fire where he will burn always.

I thought that Rome, once sick with pagan vice,
Had purged herself by now of old disease
And that no trace remained since our good prince¹
Had eased her grievous pains by healing laws.
But since the plague, of late revived, torments 5
The sons of Romulus, we must beg God's help,
Lest Rome now fall into the olden mire,
And princely robes be stained with smoke and blood.
Did that great father of his country, lord
Of the whole world,² do nought when he forbade 10
The old belief that gods roamed in the air,
And worship, in the place of Deity,
Of the Almighty Father's handiwork?
He dreaded lest the nation's moral wound³
Might form a scar, healed only on the skin 15
And fostering deep below the sutured welt,
Due to the surgeon's fault, a hidden sore
Corroded with decaying purulence.
He strove man's higher nature to revive
And to instruct the soul, cleansed of the plague, 20
How to keep safe from toxic ills within.
The remedy of tyrants heretofore
Had been to see what measures would fulfill
The present needs, with no concern beyond.
Alas, how ill they served this land, how ill 25
The senators, whom they allowed to sink
Into the pit with Jove and lesser gods.⁴
This prince has spread his rule to future times
By striving to assure the common weal.

¹ The emperor, Theodosius I, forbade pagan worship in the year 391.

² Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 2.127-132.

³ Cf. Claudian, *De cons. Stil.* 2.205; Paulinus of Nola, *Poema* 19.215-218.

⁴ Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.173.

A learned man says happily indeed: 30
 'The nation would be blest abundantly
 If kings were wise or wise men ruled as kings.'⁵
 Is our prince not of those who wear the crown
 And truths of heavenly wisdom advocate?
 All mankind and the togaed race rejoice⁶
 To have in him a leader wise; Rome thrives,
 For justice reigns: obey the chief who holds
 The scepter! He commands you to shake off
 The superstitious errors of your sires,
 To know no god but Him who rules all things 40
 And shaped the vast dimensions of the world.

Do we believe that Saturn better ruled⁷
 Our Latin forebears, he who trained rude minds
 And savage hearts with mandates such as these:
 'I am a god, I came a fugitive; 45
 Give me asylum; hide an aged god
 Thrust out by a faithless son. Here will I lurk
 And name of *Latin* give to race and land.'⁸
 A pruning hook of iron I shall forge
 To trim your vines, and I shall build a town, 50
 Known as Saturnia, on your river banks.⁹
 You shall devote a grove and altar there
 To honor me—for I am son of heaven.'
 Their witless children chiseled gods from bronze,
 Whose tombs we know are in their country seen, 55
 Whom that outcast in shape of horse begot¹⁰
 And brought to Italy: for he was first
 To woo the Tuscan maids as fictive god.

5 Cf. Plato, *Republic* 5.473d; Cicero, *Ad Quintum* 1.1.29.

6 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 1.282.

7 Cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 21.4-7 (Vol. 10, this series); also Tertullian, *Apology* 10.6-11 (Vol. 10, this series); Cyprian, *Quod idoli dii non sunt* 2 (Vol. 36, this series).

8 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.322-323.

9 Cf. *ibid.* 357-358.

10 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 3.92-95.

Olympian Jupiter, baser than his sire,¹¹
 Laconian women soiled with shameful lust: 60
 Now carrying off his loved one on a bull;
 Now as a swan, with feathers soft as down,
 Singing the rapturous notes of its death song
 To lure a maid that she may bear his love;
 Now when the doors were barred with heavy bolts, 65
 As a rich lover, breaking hollow tiles
 And pouring through the roof a shower of gold
 Into the bosom of his paramour;
 Now with his armor-bearer helping him
 Embracing Ganymede with lustful arms 70
 And rousing thus his sister's jealous wrath.
 The source of all this ill is that dull folk
 Saw in the outcast's reign a golden age,
 And that the wily Jupiter devised
 A thousand forms of guile and trickery, 75
 Changing his skin and face to make men think
 He was a bull, an eagle, or a swan,
 Or gold infused into a maiden's breast.
 For what would not such ignorant men believe,
 Whose lives were spent with herds and savage beasts, 80
 Whose minds were not endowed with sense divine?
 To any myth that wanton knave conceived
 The hapless people gave a ready ear.

The reign of Jove was followed by an age
 Which made the hardy rustics slaves to sin. 85
 Men ignorant of theft were taught this art
 By Mercury, Maia's son.¹² Now he is deemed
 A mighty god whose shrewdness turned out thieves.
 Skilled in Thessalian magic, as they tell,
 He called the spirits of the dead to life¹³ 90

11 Cf. Tertullian, *Apology* 21.8 (Vol. 10, this series); also Cyprian, *Ad Donatum* 8 (Vol. 36, this series).

12 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.297.

13 Cf. *ibid.* 4.242-243.

By power of his wand and nullified
 Dominion of Cocytus over death
 By raising up the shades or plunging them
 Into the depths below. He had both skills
 And armed his hand with heinous twofold crime; 95
 With mumbled magic he knew how to raise
 The spirits and cast a spell on dust entombed,
 While others he astutely robbed of life.
 The simple wondered at his vicious craft
 And deemed him more than man, borne through the
 clouds 100
 And on winged feet traversing lively winds.

Among the gods there stands one forged of bronze,
 A man of Greece, who shines on Numa's height.¹⁴
 He was the lord of well-tilled fields and famed
 For teeming gardens, but a libertine, 105
 Who full of burning passion used to plague
 The country women and ensconce himself
 Amid the willow groves and hedges dense;
 Urged on by lust and ready for misdeeds
 He gave no respite to his fiery blood. 110
 This famous god came from the Hellespont¹⁵
 And brought to Italy's gardens his base rites;
 Receiving yearly bowls of milk and cakes,¹⁶
 He guards the rural vineyards of Sabine,
 And with his bough is shameful to behold. 115

The love that Hercules felt for a boy
 Upon the cross-banks of the Argo raged,
 The while beneath Nemean skin he hid¹⁷
 His lust and for lost Hylas searched in vain.
 Now dancing priests of the Pinarian house 120

14 Priapus, the protector of gardens; cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.319-333.

15 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 4.111.

16 Cf. Vergil, *Eclogues* 7.33.

17 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.295.

Frequent his temple on the Aventine.¹⁸

A Theban youth, who conquered India,¹⁹
 Is made a god and triumphs wantonly;
 Proud of his gold and spoils from captured lands,²⁰
 He gives himself to revels with his crew 125
 And steeps himself in rich Falernian wine,
 Besprinkling from his foaming jeweled cup²¹
 The dewy backs of his ferocious team.
 To Bacchus now a goat is sacrificed²²
 On every altar, and they gnaw green snakes 130
 Who Bromius would appease, as satyrs did
 In drunken madness then before the king,
 And maenads, too, in frenzy, I believe,
 When wine inflamed and drove them into sin.
 With this wild troop the drunken debauchee 135
 Finds on a lonely shore a mistress fair,²³
 Abandoned by a faithless follower
 When he grew tired of his illicit love.
 Reeling from wine, he bids the fair one stand 140
 Amid the orgies of his wanton band
 And wear a regal crown upon her head.
 Soon Ariadne's fire is added to the stars:²⁴
 This tribute Liber to his mistress pays
 That she should light the heavenly vault above.

The ignorant, foolish rabble in those days 145
 Believed all kings had such amazing powers,
 That emperors, with all their perfidy,
 Could pass to lasting reign in heavenly courts.
 Then men believed the royal might and power,

18 Cf. *ibid.* 8.270; 7.659.

19 Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 3.720.

20 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.504.

21 Cf. *ibid.* 1.739.

22 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 2.380.

23 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 5.613.

24 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.175-179.

However weak, possessed a strength divine 150
 And heavenly right: they even worshiped kings
 With shrines and incense, which fear, love, or hope
 Increased and fixed as custom for all times,
 And this display of spurious piety²⁵
 The mists of error through the ages spread. 155
 Then reverence shown to living kings was paid
 To them when they no longer saw the light,
 And worship was transferred to their dark urns.
 Hence virgins were seduced and children born,
 Young men were loved, adulterers were caught 160
 Because the courts were wont to be on fire
 With royal vices, and offspring of gods,
 In their delights, forgot all modesty.

In passing let me touch on your forbears
 From heaven, O Rome, Gradivus, Cytherea, 165
 Because of whom men claim you half divine;
 One violates a priestess, one a mate
 From Phrygia weds. The union was unmeet
 For both: for wedlock with an earthly lord
 Did not become a goddess, nor ravishment 170
 Of a maid and furtive love befit a god.
 A woman of patrician blood in fact,
 Venus espoused a man of vulgar birth;
 If Rhea, won by love of wanton Mars,²⁶
 Gave up her chastity amid the sedge, 175
 I would believe some man of noble rank,
 But evil character, defiled the maid
 And feigned divinity, that none might dare
 To blame the wretched girl for his vile deed.
 This myth or fraud led our Italian sires 180
 To celebrate the rites of Mars at Rome,
 To grave upon the Palatine Capitol

²⁵ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.405.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.* 7.550; Ovid, *Fasti* 3.11-22.

The names of Grecian Pallas and Jupiter,
 To summon Juno from her African height,
 Gods kin to Mars; it led their kings to bring 185
 Nude Venus from the Erycinian mount,²⁷
 The mother of the gods from Phrygia,²⁸
 And from green Naxos Bacchic revelries.²⁹
 All earth-born deities have found one home,
 And you may count as many shrines of gods 190
 At Rome as tombs of heroes in the world,
 For dead men deified our people venerate.
 Such Ancus, Numa, Tullus, Numitor
 Considered gods, such fled the Trojan flames,
 Such Vesta, the Palladium, household gods, 195
 And fear of such the ancient refuge saved.
 When superstition entered pagan hearts,
 It passed down through a thousand generations
 Without a break. The youthful heir adored
 All that his hoary sires had shown to be 200
 Worthy of veneration. Infants drank
 The error with their milk and when they cried
 Had tasted sacrificial meal and watched
 Wax-coated stones and black gods smeared with oil.
 The child had seen a sacred image stand 205
 Within the home, Fortune with golden horn,
 And his pale mother praying at its feet.
 Then lifted by his nurse, he pressed his lips
 Upon the stone and poured forth childish prayers,
 Asking for riches from a sightless rock, 210
 Convinced that what he wished must thence be sought.
 He raised not eyes and heart to Wisdom's throne,
 But credulous clung to his barren rites,
 Honoring his household gods with blood of lambs.
 When he went forth on public festal days 215

²⁷ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 5.759.

²⁸ Cybele. Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.80; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 7.3 (Vol. 10, this series).

²⁹ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.125.

And saw the games, the lofty capitol,
 The laureled priests before the temples stand,
 The Sacred Way, loud with its lowing herds
 Before the shrine of Rome (for she receives
 Offerings of blood as a divinity 220
 And temples of the City and Venus rise
 To equal heights and incense burns to both),
 He held as true the Senate's high decrees
 And put his faith in idols, deeming gods
 Of heaven the statues standing in a row. 225
 Alcides stands in bronze, Arcadia's guest³⁰
 When Gades he had spoiled; the brothers twain,
 Dishonored Leda's bastard progeny,
 Nocturnal horsemen, gods of lofty Rome,
 Lean forward on their lance and fix their feet, 230
 Heralds of victory, in a lake of lead.³¹
 By these the figures stand of ancient kings,
 Tros, Italus, and two-faced Janus then,
 Father Sabinus, Saturn, Picus stained
 By drinking the deadly potion of his bride.³² 235
 A shabby altar is in front of each;
 Throngs sacrifice to Janus in his month
 With auspices and sacred feasts, and men,
 Alas, the old-time kalends still observe
 With festal rites. So has the practice grown, 240
 Begun in evil times by our forebears
 And handed down to sons of later days,
 Whose darkened hearts prolonged the vicious chain
 And spread the cult to ages without shame.

 Clinging to olden rites, these scions adored 245
 Augustus with a month, shrine, altar, priest,
 Appeased him with a calf and lamb, lay prone
³⁰ Cf. *ibid.* 8.51; 201-204.
³¹ Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum* 2.6; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 7.3 (Vol. 10, this series).
³² Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.177-191.

Before his couch, and oracles conjured.
 Inscriptions witness this, and Senate laws
 To build to Caesar a shrine like that of Jove. 250
 They launched a cult to Livia as Juno.
 Her marriage was not less perfidious
 Than Saturnia's, who her brother wed.³³
 She had not yet brought forth her unborn child,
 The son she bore of former spouse conceived,³⁴ 255
 And couch and marriage bed are both prepared;
 The husband calls his friends when her womb stirs,
 Sure now of his betrothed's fruitfulness.
 The rapturous stepfather will not wait
 For his stepson's slow birth, and mid rude chants 260
 Another's son to that new lord is born.
 The oracles of the gods, Apollo's cave,
 This answer gave that never is wedlock
 More blest than when the bride is found with child.
 This woman thou, O Rome, hast made divine 265
 And placed among thy Flora's and Venuses!³⁵
 No wonder, for what thinking man but knew
 These goddesses were living mortal folk,
 Who for their grace of form were so renowned
 In amours that they tarnished their fair names. 270

What of Antinous in heaven set,³⁶
 That favorite of a prince now deified,
 The Ganymede of Hadrian the god
 And robbed of manhood in the royal arms,
 Not his cupbearer but associate, 275
 Who with his Jove drank sacred wine and heard
 With his consort the prayers in temples made?

³³ Juno, daughter of Saturn, who was married to her brother, Jupiter.

³⁴ Cf. Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum* 2.62.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.* 6.11.

³⁶ Antinous was a Bithynian youth of whom the emperor Hadrian was so fond that he set up statues and images of him at his death and declared that he had been changed into a constellation. Cf. Dio, *Roman History* 69.11.2.

Under such Trajan, Nerva, Severus,
 Titus, and valiant Neros waged their wars,
 Heroes whom earthly glory signalized, 280
 And mortal prowess raised to heights of fame
 While cringing under such unhallowed myths!
 How shameful that such brave men should believe
 The Roman armies could be ruled by Mars,
 That vile adulterer who won the Paphian 285
 By heaping favors on Aeneas' sons!
 How happy they, if they had known the source
 Of all their blessings was God, Christ, who willed
 That kingdoms run their course, Rome's triumphs grow,
 And He Himself should come into the world! 290
 But in the shrines of Jove, Augustus, and
 The two Junos, of Venus and of Mars,
 They sacrificed their darkened, blinded souls
 And plunged them deep into the pit of death,
 Convinced that the all-ruling dwelt in mire 295
 And in the universal depths was sunk.
 All marvels of the earth and sea they thought
 Were gods. Hills, oceans, rivers, fire, our sires
 Embodied for themselves in various shapes,
 Inscribing on dumb statues names of men 300
 And calling ocean Neptune, river beds
 Cyanean Nymphs and forests Dryades,
 Or pathless rural glades Nymphs of the dells.
 The fire itself, created for our use,
 Is titled Vulcan and with power divine 305
 Is pictured; like a god in name and face,
 He has his shrines and governs furnaces,
 Smith of Aeolia or of Etna's vaults.³⁷

Some men have sought godhead in shining stars
 And dared to deify the sun, on whom 310
 Is laid the lot of bearing sleepless toil

³⁷ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.416-422.

Along a certain path in sight of men,
 Whirled through his orbit as a polished globe
 And smaller, none denies, than world and sky.
 For larger is the field than one who runs, 315
 And wider is the course, on which the wheel
 Glows as it turns upon its axle swift.
 Though some think that the earth's circumference
 Is shorter than that glorious round, and that
 The huge star's flames extend beyond a zone 320
 Greater than that of earth, yet is the orb
 Of heaven smaller and more limited,
 Whose surface by a compass, reaching far
 From its inner mark, can scarcely be traversed?
 He is true God, who all material things 325
 Transcends, who has no limits, who over all
 Presides, and bounds and fills all things at once.
 A fixed zone holds and hedges in the sun,
 It shows itself at different times: at morn
 It rises, sets at eve, and hides at night, 330
 Nor can it turn its torch toward the Wain,
 Or move sideways toward the North Wind's gates,
 Or turn around and change its wonted course.
 Shall this, then, be a god, which must perform
 The tasks by law assigned? To man himself 335
 A greater freedom has been given, for he
 May change his life and mind, whether he choose
 To go up by the path on the right or down
 The smooth way on the left,³⁸ to rest or work,
 To obey God or turn against His will. 340
 This power the Creator has not given
 To the sun, which governs the round of days
 And as a slave fulfills his destined role.
 This star is thought to drive a car and team
 And pictured with the rays about his head, 345
 His whip and reins and harness and the breasts

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.* 6.541-543; Prov. 4.27.

Of panting steeds agleam with ornaments
 Of gilded bronze, of marble, or of brass.
 After the robes of state, the ivory staff
 And curule chair, an old man bends to kiss 350
 The feet of bronze, if it can be believed,
 And decks with roses or with incense sprays
 The moveless wheels and the unbending reins.

This we might bear somehow. But do not shades
 Of lowest hell give gods to thee, O Rome? 355
 The queen of Furies, Proserpine, the bride
 Of Hades' king, from Stygian cave uplifts
 Her head, and Romans sacrifice to her
 A barren heifer when she visits them.
 In heaven and hell she is supposed to reign,³⁹ 360
 And now to drive her oxen team, now force
 Her sisters on the world with whips of snakes,⁴⁰
 Now shower arrows on the backs of goats,
 And though the same, to put on threefold form.⁴¹
 When she is Luna, she shines in splendid robes, 365
 When hurling darts, she is Latona's child,
 When seated on her throne, Pluto's consort,⁴²
 Ruling the Furies and fierce Megaera.
 If truth you seek, by name of Trivia
 A hellish fiend is worshiped, who transports 370
 You to the sky and makes you venerate
 A star as god, or forces you to stray
 Along the world's death-dealing woodland paths
 And see a goddess in the groves, who wounds
 Men's trembling hearts and slays their reckless souls 375
 With mortal blow, then plunges stricken spirits
 Beneath the earth so that they pray to gods
 Of darkness and submit to powers of night.

³⁹ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.247.

⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.* 6.572.

⁴¹ Cf. Claudian, *De raptu Pros.* 1.15.

⁴² Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.506.

Behold the criminal offerings made to Dis,⁴³
 For whom the gladiator is sacrificed 380
 To Phlegethon, victim, alas, of Rome!
 What means the impious skill of senseless sport,
 The slaughter of young men, the pleasure fed
 On blood, the circus' mortal strife, and pomp
 Of wretched shows in the amphitheatre held?⁴⁴ 385
 Charon, appeased by pious crime, receives
 Due offerings as the guide of victims slain.
 These are the joys of the infernal Jove,⁴⁵
 In these, the dark Avernian chief finds bliss.
 Is it not shameful that a mighty race 390
 Should make such offerings for the nation's weal
 And seek divine support from caves of hell?
 It calls death's ruler from his dark abode
 And offers him rich human sacrifice.
 Vain is our wonted scorn of Tauric rites:⁴⁶ 395
 For Latiaris human blood is shed
 And throngs make savage offerings at the shrine
 Of their Pluto. What holier than the place
 Which drinks the blood drawn forth by mystic swords?
 Do you doubt that there dwells in nether gloom 400
 The god you seek among the silent shades?
 Look! Why deny the dead are reckoned gods?
 Your fathers' monuments are proof. I read,
 'To spirits deified,'⁴⁷ on marble tombs
 That throng the Latin and Salarian roads. 405
 Tell me to whom you grave this line, unless
 You honor Orcus as a deity?

43 Cf. *ibid.* 12.199.

44 Cf. Claudian, *Panegyricus dictus Manlio Theodoro Consuli* 293.

45 Pluto.

46 Cf. Ovid, *Tristia* 4.4.63; Tertullian, *Apology* 9.5 (Vol. 10, this series); Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 30.4 (Vol. 10, this series).

47 *Dis Manibus*. Sepulchral inscriptions dating from the Augustan age begin with these words. Divine honors were paid to the *dii manes*, or souls of the departed. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 2.842; Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 8.26 (Vol. 14, this series).

By such rites from our fathers handed down
 The seat of highest empire was defiled,
 Until a prince, twice victor over despots,⁴⁸ 410
 Turned eyes triumphant on her noble walls.
 He saw a city, shrouded with black clouds,
 Beset with shades of night; and murky air
 Shut out the sunlight from her seven hills.
 Then moved with pity, he addressed her thus: 415
 'O faithful mother, lay aside thy gloom!
 For splendid vesture thou art famed, proud spoils
 And plenitude of gold adorn thy head,
 But flitting vapors stain thy lofty crest,
 A lurid light and leaden sky bedim 420
 Thy very gems, and smoke that swirls around
 Thy face discolors thy bright diadem.
 I see dim shadows round thee hovering,
 Dark spirits and black idols fly about.
 I urge thee, lift thy head above the earth 425
 And leave the raging storms beneath thy feet.
 The whole world yields to thee; that thou dost rule
 The world as mistress and dost plant thy foot
 On all things mortal, God Himself has willed.
 It is not meet for thee, as queen to mind 430
 The things of earth⁴⁹ or seek divinity
 In lower regions, which thou dost command.
 While I am prince, I shall not let thee hold
 Old fallacies, nor worship monstrous gods.
 If they are stone, they wear away with age 435
 Or crumble at a blow; if plaster cased
 In metal, faulty cement will relax;
 If statues are designed from plates of bronze,⁵⁰
 The hollow frames will bend beneath their weight
 And fall apart, or scaly rust will eat 440

48 Theodosius, who after his defeat of Maximus and Eugenius, suppressed pagan worship.

49 Cf. Col. 3.2.

50 Cf. Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes* 6.16.

Into the figures, piercing them with holes.
 Let earth not be thy god, nor star above,
 Nor ocean, nor a power that hides below,
 Doomed to infernal darkness for its crimes,
 Nor yet of human virtues fashion gods, 445
 Nor spectral shapes of wandering spirits or souls.
 Far be it from thee that a ghost or place,
 A genius or a phantom be thy god.
 Leave heathen deities to savage tribes,
 To whom all fear has made them dread is blest, 450
 Whom signs and wonders force to put their faith
 In frightful gods, whom bloody feasts delight,
 When in a grove they slay the fattened beast
 And surfeited with wine, devour its flesh.
 It is a shame for thee, who hast imposed 455
 Thy laws on conquered tribes and hast refined
 Their savage ways of life and war throughout
 Thy vast empire, to cling to false beliefs
 And superstitions held by brutish folk
 In their perverse, unreasoning ignorance. 460
 Whether I arm for war, whether I rule
 In peace, whether, within the city's walls
 I triumph over two usurpers quelled,
 Thou must, O queen, acknowledge my ensigns,
 On which the cross appears agleam with gems 465
 Or borne on lofty shafts in solid gold.
 By this sign Constantine was conqueror,⁵¹
 When having crossed the Alps, he broke the chains
 Maxentius and his court had forged for thee.
 Thou didst then mourn a hundred senators 470
 Condemned to death. Or a man who wept
 The rape of his betrothed by a wretch
 Was plunged in darkness, bound with cruel chains;
 Or if a bride, called to the royal bed
 Began to satisfy the tyrant's lust, 475

⁵¹ Cf. Eusebius, *De vita Constantini* 1.28.

The groom would expiate his ire by death.
 The prisons of the cruel prince were filled
 With fathers of maidens; if a sire bewailed
 His daughter's seizure, he could not betray
 His pain or sorrow with impunity.⁵² 480
 The Mulvian Bridge was witness of the might
 That blessed the Christian victor's arms when he
 Advanced on Rome and into Tiber's stream
 The tyrant hurled, what standard he upbore
 What holy sign upon his javelins gleamed. 485
 The sign of Christ in gold and gems adorned
 The labarum⁵³ and on the shields was graved;⁵⁴
 The cross of Christ shone on the helmets' crests.
 The noble senators recall that day
 When they marched forth from prison, with their hair 490
 All matted and their limbs in fetters bound,⁵⁵
 And clinging to the victor's feet in tears,
 Lay prone before that glorious sign. That day
 The Senate glorified the cross and adored
 The name of Christ, borne by avenging troops. 495
 Shun after this, O capital of the world,
 Thy wonted worship of insensate fiends
 And learn the power of the one true God.
 Renounce thy childish festivals, thy rites
 And cults, unworthy of a realm so great. 500
 Cleanse marbles stained with blood, O noble lords!
 Let statues, works of famous artists, stand
 Unsoiled, our country's fairest ornaments,
 And let no shameful use these monuments
 Of art defile, or make them cause of sin.' 505

52 The following line is added here in some MSS: *vim libertatis nimiae, patriumque dolorem.*

53 The standard of Constantine with the letters XP, representing the name of Christ.

54 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.392.

55 Cf. *ibid.* 2.277.

The city, taught by such edicts, forsook
 Her ancient errors and the turbid clouds
 Shook from her aged face, her leaders quick,
 At their great leader's call, to follow Christ
 And place their hope in everlasting life. 510
 Then Rome, enlightened in old age, first blushed
 For her past centuries, ashamed and grieved
 At years gone by with their idolatry.
 When she remembered that the soil hard by
 Her walls was drenched with martyrs' guiltless blood 515
 And saw around her scores of frowning tombs,
 She mourned her frightful sentences, her rage
 And frenzied sanction of her shameful rites.
 She made amends for wounds of righteousness
 By late obedience and prayers for grace; 520
 Lest her great realm with cruelty be charged
 For scorn of justice, she atonement made⁵⁶
 And with great love embraced the Christian faith.
 Of less worth was the triumph of Marius
 When through the cheering throngs he dragged Jugurtha, 525
 Nor did the consul from Arpinum bring⁵⁷
 So great a boon to thee, O Rome, when he
 Doomed Cethegus, as that conferred on thee
 In our time by a noble prince, who banned
 Many a Catiline, not plotting fires 530
 For thy abodes, nor steel for senators,
 But darkest hell and torments for men's souls.
 Fiends wandered through the temples and through courts,
 They held the Forum and the Capitol,⁵⁸
 They had set snares to capture people's hearts 535
 And in their very marrow they instilled
 A secret poison that spread through their souls.
 A peaceful conqueror of hidden foes,

56 Cf. *ibid.* 4.636.

57 Cicero, who was born at Arpinum.

58 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.361,653.

That prince gained bloodless victories and led
 The land of Quirinus to realms above. 540
 No bounds he set, no limits fixed of time;
 An empire without end he showed,⁵⁹ lest power
 And glory won by Rome should ever wane.

One could see senators, lights of the world,
 And throngs of old Catos exult to wear, 545
 With whiter toga, snowy robes of faith
 And put aside their priestly ornaments.
 The Evandrian Senate,⁶⁰ sons of Annius
 And children of the Probi,⁶¹ with but few
 Left on Tarpeia's rock, hasten to shrines 550
 Of Nazarenes and apostolic fonts.
 First to adorn the city's head, they say,
 Was great Anicius (Rome, herself, thus boasts);
 Heir of the blood and name of Olybrius
 And consul in the palm emblazoned robe, 555
 He lowered Brutus' rods at martyrs' shrines
 And in Christ's honor bent the Ausonian ax.
 Paulinus and Bassus gave themselves to Christ⁶²
 With lively faith and lifted up the scions
 Of a patrician house to future bliss. 560
 Why in my verses tell how the Gracchi,
 Friends of the people, sure in power and rank,
 Gave orders for the statues of the gods
 To be thrown down⁶³ and with their lictors vowed
 Themselves to Christ and His all-powerful rule? 565
 We may count hundreds of old families⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.* 1.288-289.

⁶⁰ Evander, the founder of a city on the site of Rome, is credited with establishing the Senate.

⁶¹ Cf. Claudian, *Probino et Olybrio* 143. The Christian family of the Anicii Probi was renowned for its wealth and prominence in the government of Rome. Cf. Vol. 16, this series, pp. 268-273.

⁶² St. Paulinus of Nola, bishop and poet (357-431); Junius Bassus, Prefect of Rome in 358, was the first of his family to become a Christian.

⁶³ Cf. Jerome, *Ep.* 107.3.

⁶⁴ Cf. Statius, *Thebaid* 3.600.

Of noble blood, who to Christ's standard turned
 And raised themselves from depths of paganism.
 If any image of the city exists,
 It is in these; if great men represent 570
 The nation's character, all these do so
 When joined by good men of one mind with them.
 Mark the grand hall where meet the civic lights:
 You will find few still bound by pagan folly
 And barely clinging to abolished cults, 575
 Who would preserve the darkness of the past,
 Or spurn the splendor of the noonday sun.

Now to the people turn your eyes. How few
 Who do not scorn Jove's altar stained with blood!
 The common crowd who to their attics climb, 580
 Who wear out pavements walking to and fro⁶⁵
 And fare on bread doled out from lofty steps,
 Now seek the tomb on Vatican hill, where lie
 The ashes, pledge of their great Father's love,⁶⁶
 Or hasten to the Lateran to receive 585
 The King's anointing with the sacred sign.⁶⁷
 Do we still doubt that Rome to Thee, O Christ,
 Has given herself and yielded to Thy laws,
 And that with all her people and great men
 She now extends her realm beyond the stars? 590
 I am not moved when some men keep their eyes
 Closed in the light of day and go astray.
 Though famed for merit and for noble blood,
 Though heaped with laurels and titles of renown,
 Though they are listed in the calendar 595
 And mark the yearly record with their names,

⁶⁵ Cf. Juvenal 6.350.

⁶⁶ St. Peter. Cf. *Peristephonon* 12.29-31 (Vol. 43, this series).

⁶⁷ Baptism. The great Lateran palace, belonging to the family of the Laterani from early times, was given to the Church by Constantine about the year 313. A basilica, now St. John Lateran, with a baptistery attached, was constructed in connection with the palace under the direction of Constantine.

Though with the ancients found in wax or bronze,
 These few, now without following, do not
 Make up the senate or represent the state.
 The views they foster, only some endorse, 600
 And now infrequently; the nation's will
 Opposes and condemns their timid plaints.
 If laws of conscript fathers in ancient times
 Were valid only when the records showed
 Three hundred senators had sanctioned them, 605
 Let us maintain this rule; and let the voice
 Of the minority in silence yield.

See how our benches in the senate rule
 That Jove's vile couch and all idolatry
 Be banished from our city's noble walls. 610
 Great numbers to that section freely cross
 To which our worthy emperor's voice leads.
 No place is there for spite, no one is forced;
 That all will thus is clear; they are convinced
 And follow, not commands, but reason's choice. 615
 Our generous prince, rewarding all alike,
 Confers on pagans highest dignities
 And lets them seek the homage of their own,
 Nor hinders men still sunk in idol cults
 From reaching earthly heights, for things divine 620
 Debar men not from life in wonted ways.
 He named thee⁶⁷ to the consulship and seat
 Of judgment, gave the toga trimmed with gold,
 He whose belief offends thee, champion
 Of dying gods, thou who alone dost plead 625
 For the return of Vulcan's wiles and tricks
 Of Mars and Venus, Saturn's stones and rage
 Of Phoebus, the Ilian mother's festival,⁶⁹
 The rites of Nysian Bacchus, Isis' mimes

68 Symmachus.

69 Cybele. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 4. 181-186.

For lost Osiris, sport of her bald heads,⁷⁰ 630
And all the phantoms of the Capitol.

O speech that wells from wondrous fount of words,
The crown of Roman eloquence that vies
With Tullius himself! What gems flow forth
From that rich source! Lips worthy to be dyed 635
In everlasting gold had they praised God,
But they were stained with laud of monstrous fiends!
It was as if a man should try to turn
The sod with rakes of ivory, or till
The ground with fork of gold; the muddy soil 640
Would dim the brightness of the burnished prongs
And smear the precious tool with squalid earth.

I fear no charge of rashness, nor that men
May think I enter on a clash of wits;
I know myself and my poor gifts too well. 645
Rude as I am in speech, I would not dare
To challenge arrows darted by that tongue.
Let his book be untouched, and his great work
Hold fast the fame won by its eloquence.
But let me save my breast from wounds and turn 650
Aside the flying javelins with my shield.
For if our faith, safe in this age of peace,
Has been assailed by crafty, warlike foes,
Why should I not ward off their airy shafts,
So that their wasted blows may be in vain? 655

But it is time to halt the march of this small book
Lest my unbroken song may cause offense.

70 Cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 23.1 (Vol. 10, this series).

AGAINST SYMMACHUS

(CONTRA SYMMACHUM)

Book Two

AGAINST SYMMACHUS

Book Two

Preface

Simon, who was surnamed Peter,¹
Chief disciple of Christ the Lord,
On a day at the set of sun
When the evening sky grows red,
Had unloosened his anchor's hook, 5
Filled the sails with the swelling winds,
And made ready to cross the sea.
But night roused a contrary gale²
That stirred up the deep-seated waves
And buffeted the floundering boat. 10
Shouts of mariners struck the sky,
With their shrieks and despairing groans
Amid creaking of swaying ropes,
Nor did any have hope of escape
From shipwreck and a watery death, 15
When the oarsmen all wan with fear
Saw Christ himself not far away
Treading surely upon the surge,
Just as though on the barren shore
He walked over the solid ground. 20
All the rest of the sailors stood
Affrighted at this miracle;
Peter only without alarm

¹ Cf. Acts 10.5; Matt. 10.2.

² Cf. Matt. 14.24-32; Mark 6.45-51; John 6.16-21.

Knew the Lord of the heavenly throne,
 Of the earth and the pathless sea, 25
 Whose omnipotent power subdues
 Restless waters beneath His feet.
 He raised suppliant hands in prayer
 And entreated the well-known help,
 But Christ, nodding assuringly, 30
 Bade him leap from the tossing ship.
 Straightway Peter obeyed the word,
 But scarcely had he wet his soles
 On the crest of the foaming waves
 When his tottering steps gave way 35
 And his feet were about to sink.
 God upbraided this mortal man
 For his lack of a steadfast faith
 And the strength to surmount the flood
 As a follower of Christ the Lord. 40
 Then his servant He lifted up
 And held him and taught him to walk
 On the waves of the swollen sea.

Thus I by my loquacious tongue
 From the haven of silence am led 45
 Into perils unknown and dark,
 Not as Peter, disciple true,
 Confident in his virtue and faith,
 But as one whom unnumbered sins
 Have shipwrecked on the rolling seas. 50
 Bold I am, it is true indeed,
 When with consciousness of the night
 I am passing in my dark life,
 I fear not to expose my bark
 To the waves of so great a man,³ 55
 Than whom none is more skilled today.
 In the storms of his eloquence

³ Symmachus.

He leaps, thunders and roars and swells.
 He can easily shipwreck me,
 One untaught in seafaring arts, 60
 Unless Thou, O Almighty Christ,
 Stretch Thy hand forth with help divine,
 That the blast of his powerful words
 May not plunge me into the flood,
 But, advancing with careful steps, 65
 I may walk on the surging waves.

Thus far the subject of my song has been
 The birth of gods of old, the origin
 Of pagan cults and Rome's belief in Christ.
 Now I shall face my foe and make reply.⁴
 Whence say they he began that he might bend 5
 The hearts of our good lords⁵ with suasive arts?
 These militant chieftains in the flower of youth,⁶
 Born in their father's wars, reared in the mold
 Of their grandsire, fired by ancestral fame,
 This clever orator sways, as if war-trumps 10
 He blared, and stirs their spirits with words like these:
 'If victory won and to be won, my lords,
 Is dear to you, let the chaste goddess keep
 Her shrine while you now reign. Is any man
 Such friend to foes as to grudge her worship 15
 In your empire, which she so glorifies?'⁷

The princes calmly answered the envoy's words:
 'We know how sweet is victory to the brave,
 Most fluent speaker of the Latin tongue,

4 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1-2.

5 Honorius and Arcadius, the youthful sons of Theodosius, who became co-emperors of the East and West at the death of their father in 395.

6 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.160.

7 Cf. Symmachus, *Relatio* 3.

But we know in what way she must be sought; 20
 As boys our father trained us in this art
 And when a boy he learned it from his sire.
 Altars and meal do not bring victory:⁸
 Unending toil, stout courage, lofty spirit,
 Zeal, vigor, and precaution, all of these 25
 Bring victory, when joined with force of arms.⁹
 If warriors lack these, though a Victory
 Of golden talents made, unfold bright wings
 In a marble shrine, she will not stand by them
 And by reverses manifest offense. 30
 O soldier, doubtful of your own main force,
 Why from a woman's statue seek support?
 No armed cohort has seen a maid with wings
 Guiding the darts of panting warriors.
 Seek you the cause of victory? It is 35
 The hand of man and God's almighty power,
 No warlike woman with her hair caught up,
 Feet bare, and bosom girt with flowing scarf.
 The painter's brush has taught you to create¹⁰
 A god from monsters by the poets feigned, 40
 Or from your shrines the artist has derived
 A figure he has matched in liquid wax,
 And aided by the flights of poetry,
 Has archly painted it with colored dyes.
 Thus these one path pursue, thus empty dreams 45
 Homer, Apelles, Numa, all conceive,
 And painting, poetry, and idolatry
 Thrive on their triple motive of deceit.
 If this is not so, why do poets' tales
 Inspire frescoes and waxen images? 50
 Why does the priest of Phrygia maim himself
 When poetry fair Attis has unmanned?

8 Cf. Ambrose, *Epist.* 18.7 (Vol. 26, this series).

9 Claudian, *De tertio cons. Hon.* 144.

10 Cf. Wisd. 15.4,5.

Why are hoofed horses kept from Trivia's shrine¹¹
 And sacred woodlands, when the Muse has dragged
 A virtuous youth and chariot on the shore 55
 And a wall displays the scene in many hues?
 If you have any shame, idolater,
 Cease giving fancied shapes to spiritual things,
 Cease covering human backs with down: in vain
 You call a woman goddess and bird of prey. 60
 Would you, O Rome, adorn your Senate house?
 Hang there the trophies won by blood and arms,
 Gather the diadems of conquered kings,
 But break the sordid idols you have banned;
 Then in your hall the memory will be kept 65
 Of victory not of earth but beyond the stars.'

When with such words our princes have replied,
 He goes on and his deep-toned trumpet sounds;
 He mentions ancient custom and contends
 That wonted ways are dear, and states and men 70
 Have their own laws. 'As children are at birth
 Endowed with varied souls,' he says, 'likewise
 Each city, when its walls first rise, receives
 A genius which directs its destiny.'¹²
 He adds that hidden truths and mysteries 75
 Can be sensed through good fortune that gives proof
 Of blessing, if that which men undertake
 Turns out well; that for our forbears the cult
 Of idols ever brought prosperity.
 He cites the glorious past and pictures Rome, 80
 Grown old, with snow-white hair and wrinkled brow,
 Pleading that her divinities be restored:
 'I am free, let me live in my own way.
 Will any blame me for my thousand years?
 All dwell beneath the sun and breathe one air, 85

11 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.778-780.

12 Cf. Symmachus, *Relatio* 8; Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.437.

All living creatures share one atmosphere,
 But who and what God is, by divers paths
 We seek, and over roadways far apart
 We reach the selfsame Being: each race draws near
 This mystery in its accustomed way.¹³ 90
 To these words uttered with such eloquence
 Faith has replied, for she alone unlocks
 The mysteries of orthodox belief.
 For when we treat of things divine and strive
 To know that One who no beginning had, 95
 Nor will have end, who prior to chaos was
 And made the universe, our human mind
 Is too finite and weak for this great task.¹⁴
 If our weak nature tries to penetrate,
 With gaze too keen, the mysteries of God, 100
 Who can doubt that the feeble sight will fail,
 That weary mental powers will be confused
 And sink beneath the weight of futile toil.
 The easy way of faith leads to belief
 In an Almighty Father who bestows 105
 His blessings on us now and promises
 Eternal joys, so that we perish not
 Nor vanish wholly after this brief life.
 Discern the Giver through the gift itself:
 From God are gifts eternal and divine, 110
 The gifts of men are passing and short-lived.
 All temporal things are transient and cheap,
 Unworthy of an everlasting Giver,
 Who has the fullness of being without end
 And gives to man that which will never end. 115
 For if God gives us perishable gifts
 And nought more precious has, then He is poor
 And weak, unworthy of the highest praise,
 Not infinite, but mere shadow of godhead.

13 Cf. Symmachus, *ibid.* 9 and 10.

14 Cf. Prov. 25.27; Sir. (Ecclus.) 3.22.

Faith argues thus, nay even has no doubt 120
 That one true God exists, who bids us hope
 Our life and being will not see lasting death
 If we are worthy. 'If you would,' He says,
 'Ascend to heaven, banish cares of earth.
 For far as earth is distant from the sky 125
 And heaven from the world below, so far
 Are your vain thoughts from my eternal thoughts,¹⁵
 Ill from good, sin from virtue, dark from light.
 I counsel you to shun all passing things
 And deem as nought all to corruption prone, 130
 For it is destined to return to nought.
 All earth brings forth and holds, at dawn of time
 I made; I decked with splendid ornaments
 The shining world and formed the elements,
 But willed that their enjoyment be confined 135
 Within due bounds, as far as mortal frame
 And fleeting human life may have the need,
 Not that man, by unbridled passion ruled,
 Should reckon good alone things sweet and vain,
 Which I have preordained to pass with time. 140
 The span of life I fixed to prove men's souls,
 Lest virtue never tried might lack the strength
 For winning glory on the wrestling field.
 Seductive and pernicious is the taste
 Of passing things that captivate the heart¹⁶ 145
 And hold it fast. Indulgence must be curbed,
 And from its snares the soul must be set free,
 Lest soft, tenacious fetters weigh it down.
 Man must strive lustily and virtue's path
 Must tread, and he must not find his delight 150
 In temporal things, amass great stocks of gold,¹⁷
 Turn avid gaze on many-colored gems,

15 Cf. Isa. 55.9.

16 Cf. Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 6.22.5 (Vol. 49, this series).

17 Cf. Tibullus 1.1.1.

Show off to gain the favor of the crowd¹⁸
 And swell with pride at worldly fame, extend
 His heritage of patrimonial lands 155
 And set his heart upon a neighbor's fields,¹⁹
 Indulge the flesh in all he wills and does,
 Prefer material gain to righteousness;²⁰
 But place all hope in Me, that what I give
 Will never fade and will forever last.' 160

When God this promise makes, what noble spirit
 In preference to eternal gifts would choose
 Ephemeral things? What sober man would rate
 The joys of sense above the soul's rewards?
 What sets a man apart from brutes if not 165
 That beasts see present goods, while I have hope
 Of goods beyond all time and human sight?
 For if my life will perish with my flesh
 And all I am cannot last after death,²¹
 What heavenly king, what maker of the world, 170
 What god or power have I a cause to fear?
 Aflame with lust, foul orgies I will taste,
 Stain marriage beds, scorn sacred modesty,
 Deny a kinsman's unattested trust,²²
 Despoil poor clients greedily, resort 175
 To sorcery to end a mother's life,
 (By living longer she defrauds the heirs),
 And fear no punishment: the laws are spurned,
 Justice stands armed, but knows not of the crime,²³
 Or if it knows, the judge is bribed with gold. 180
 The ax but rarely strikes the guilty wretch.²⁴
 But why these thoughts? God with stern majesty

18 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.816.

19 Cf. Horace, *Satires* 2.6.8.

20 Cf. Horace, *Odes* 4.9.41.

21 Cf. 1 Cor. 15.32; Lactantius, *op. cit.* 3.17.36 (Vol. 49, this series).

22 Cf. Juvenal 13.60.

23 Cf. Tertullian, *Apology* 45.5 (Vol. 10, this series).

24 Cf. Cyprian, *Ad Donatus* 10 (Vol. 36, this series).

Chides me and warns that death will not efface
 The record of my deeds: 'The spirit of man
 Will never die,' He says; 'it will atone 185
 Forever for the body's misconduct.²⁵
 To plunge a spiritual being into flames
 Is nought for Me. Though it outstrip the wind,
 My punishments will overtake the soul,
 For I am spirit, Creator of all spirits. 190
 Like penalty I shall make the body share,
 For to their old-time shape I can restore
 The ashes, nor do I resign this power:
 The form I made I can raise from the dead.²⁶
 Types of my power lie in the seeds themselves:²⁷ 195
 Nature equips them all to come to life
 After their death. For they become dried up
 When vital force departs; then dry and dead,
 They lie in trench or furrow, buried there,
 Until they sprout and from their tombs arise. 200
 Can you divine or know what artisan
 Arranges this, what virtue acts within?
 Poor wretch, be not deceived by scientists!
 Creation's Lord, I can restore all things
 That have decayed or died and clothe again 205
 The withered branch with former flower or leaf:
 And I shall do the same one day for man,
 Raise him from lifeless ashes and build up
 His pristine frame to expiate his sins
 In torments or to shine on thrones above, 210
 Never again to die in either state.
 But while the twofold substance still is one
 Let it be mindful of its Author and let
 It humbly worship Him.²⁸ The living soul

25 Cf. Tertullian, *op. cit.* 45.7 (Vol. 10, this series).

26 Cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 34.9 (Vol. 10, this series).

27 Cf. 1 Cor. 15.36: John 12.24; Minucius Felix, *op. cit.* 34.11 (Vol. 10, this series).

28 Cf. Claudian, *De cons. Stil.* 2.71-72.

Was not by one God made and human frame 215
 By one diverse, nor are life's blessings ruled
 By many powers; one God does not supply
 The crops and ears of wheat, another give
 The wine from grapes and make the red juice flow.
 I am one God, who fills the olive trees 220
 With fruits you deem by Grecian Pallas given,²⁹
 Who grants Lucina's hours to men at birth.
 United by my law in bonds of love,
 The sexes joyfully propagate their kind;
 By sinful amours you profane this love 225
 And under Venus' shadow hide your shame.
 Alone I rule the elements, nor tire,
 As some weak mortal, from the heavy toil.
 Infinite light is mine, eternal life,
 And age your human mind can never grasp. 230
 I need no help in governing the world,
 I seek not partners nor associates.
 The hosts of angels fashioned by my hand,
 I know what their created nature is
 And for what purpose I have destined them. 235
 Ignoring Me, you feign a thousand gods
 Endowed with my omnipotence, and thus
 Make of Me many parts, from whom no part
 Can be divorced, for simple entity
 Cannot have parts. Composite being alone 240
 Can be divided; none created Me,
 So I, one God, am not divisible.³⁰
 I am no part of what I made from nought.
 Wherefore, O man, one temple build to Me
 And worship Me as one true God. I scorn 245
 Your stones, rock hewn from Paros and Punic cliffs,
 And Synna, mottled green, from Sparta brought;
 Let no man offer Me red stone from crags.

²⁹ Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 2.181.

³⁰ Cf. Lactantius, *op. cit.* 1.3.9 (Vol. 49, this series).

A temple not of stone but of the heart³¹
 I love; on gold foundations of faith it rests, 250
 Its walls with virtue shine, and justice gilds
 The lofty roof, while chastity bestrews
 The floor with flowers and guards the entrance hall.
 This house is meet for Me, this fair abode
 I enter, worthy of its heavenly guest. 255
 This dwelling is not new; my glory flowed
 Into the flesh, the very light of God
 Enlightened man, and for Himself God made
 The human body His own resting place.
 I had made man a perfect being, had 260
 Commanded him to stand upright with eyes³²
 On heaven and his thoughts all turned on Me;
 But looking down, he stooped to earthly gain
 And from his heart thrust my divinity.
 He had to be redeemed: my Spirit came down³³ 265
 And impregnated flesh made from the dust
 With the divine nature; God has assumed
 Humanity, joining it with divinity,
 And kindled in men's hearts new love of Me.'

Tell me, most learned judge of Italy, 270
 What welcome your ears give to God's precepts.
 Without due thought do you cling to old ways,
 And does a wise man's keen insight allow
 Such words as these: 'Old custom I prefer
 To virtue's path, the worship revealed by heaven, 275
 Belief in truth and doctrines of the faith'³⁴
 If we must hold in reverence and observe
 The barbarous customs of the primitive world,

31 Cf. 1 Cor. 3.16; Cyprian, *De idolorum vanitate* 9 (Vol. 36, this series).

32 Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.84; Lactantius, *op. cit.* 2.1.14 (Vol. 49, this series).

33 Cf. Luke 1.35.

34 Cf. Symmachus, *Relatio* 8.

Let us retrace the ages to time's dawn³⁵
 And choose to scoff at all the usages 280
 That were discovered in ensuing years.
 When earth was new, no yeomen tilled the fields:³⁶
 What use the plow or harrow's needless toil?
 Better to feed on acorns from the oak.
 Men first with wedges split their kindling wood:³⁷ 285
 Let fiery furnaces our axes melt
 And let the molten ore flow back to mines.
 Slain cattle furnished clothing and frigid caves³⁸
 The meager homes: let us go back to caverns
 And put on hairy garb of unsewn skins. 290
 Men, once barbarians, tamed their savage hearts
 And grew humane: let them go back again
 To their wild shouts and bestial ways of life.
 Now let a youth with Scythian duty hurl
 His sire from the sacred bridge (such was the rule), 295
 Let Saturn's temples smoke with infant deaths³⁹
 And cruel altars sound with tearful cries.
 Let Romans build their huts of fragile straw,⁴⁰
 Such as where Remus dwelt, spread royal beds
 With hay and on their hairy bodies drape 300
 A cloak made from the skin of a Libyan bear.⁴¹
 Such the Sicilian and Tuscan chiefs once wore.
 In course of time the Rome of ancient years
 Has changed her cults, her dress, her laws and arms.⁴²
 She worships gods not known when Quirinus reigned; 305
 Some things she has improved, some given up,
 But has not ceased to change her usages
 Or to reverse laws sanctioned long ago.

35 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 2.402.

36 Cf. *ibid.* 1.125.

37 Cf. *ibid.* 1.144.

38 Cf. Juvenal 6.2.

39 Cf. Tertullian, *op. cit.* 9.2-4 (Vol. 10, this series).

40 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.354.

41 Cf. *ibid.* 5.57; 8.368.

42 Cf. Tertullian, *op. cit.* 6.9 (Vol. 10, this series).

Why do you cite against me wonted rites,
 O Roman Senator, when a change of mind 310
 Has made Senate and people alter codes?
 Now when it profits us to lay aside
 The manners of the past for newer ways,
 We take delight in the discovery
 Of things not known before; the life of man 315
 Grows and improves by long experience.⁴³
 Such changes may be seen in human life,
 Which varies with each age: the infant crawls,
 The boy totters both in step and mind,
 The robust youth with fiery passion burns, 320
 Then comes the time of ripe maturity,
 And last old age, sagacious but infirm,
 In body falters, but is sound in mind.
 These are the steps through which the human race
 Has run its varied course: thus rude at first 325
 And sunk in mire, it led a bestial life,
 Dragging its infant body on all fours.⁴⁴
 Then as a youth, apt in acquiring skills,
 It was refined through training in new roles;
 Next through the years of passion it evolved, 330
 Swollen with vice, until its powers matured;⁴⁵
 Now comes the time for tasting things divine
 With mind serene, and searching earnestly
 Into salvation's hidden mysteries.
 Yet if you have such love of age-old ways 335
 And shrink from giving up your former rites,
 In ancient books a noble instance shows
 That at the time of the flood, or long before,
 The race then dwelling on the new-formed earth
 And in an empty world adored one God.⁴⁶ 340

43 Cf. Juvenal 13.18.

44 Bergman regards this line, which appears in some MSS, as an interpolation.

45 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.639.

46 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.62.

From it is drawn the long line of our stock,
 Which now restores its native piety.
 But since we speak of Roman rites, I prove
 That Hector's progeny for many years
 Invoked not many gods, but were content 345
 With scattered shrines and altars on the hills.
 Rome came by countless gods, when through her arms
 She conquered cities and great triumphs won;
 With her victorious hand she gathered up
 The idols of the foe from smoking shrines 350
 And brought them home as hallowed deities.⁴⁷
 One image she from ruins of Corinth snatched,
 One she from burning Athens took as prey,
 Cleopatra's fall gave statues with dogs' heads,
 And having conquered Ammon's sands, she had 355
 Among her Afric trophies some with horns.
 When Rome acclaimed a conquering general's car,
 She added altars of the gods and made
 From captured plunder new divinities,
 Gods rooted up along with native walls 360
 And powerless to protect their sacred shrines.
 Do you not see how ancient customs change
 And waver in their course from age to age,
 Adopting gods not to our fathers known
 And making use of strange religious rites⁴⁸ 365
 Instead of native worship. Every cult
 Has come an exile to our hostile shores.
 In vain, O bigot, you uphold old rites;
 You cherish not ancestral custom, wretch.

 Our orator declares that fate assigns 370
 A genius to each city by which it lives.
 'For every race or city has,' he says,
 'A fate or genius like the distinctive souls

47 Cf. Ambrose, *Epist.* 18.30 (Vol. 26, this series).

48 Cf. Tertullian, *op. cit.* 6.10 (Vol. 10, this series).

That into our new bodies are infused.⁴⁹
 First, what this genius is, I do not know, 375
 Or what its nature, powers, or origin,
 Whether pure spirit or matter of some kind,
 What are its thoughts, what functions it performs.
 I know, however, that the souls of men
 Spread through the living veins, so that the blood 380
 Receives from them its motion and its heat,
 And flowing through the members, warms the cold,
 Moistens the arid, and the rigid bends.
 The living spirit thus rules the life of man,
 But you compare it with a fancied genius 385
 Of walls, which not now is, nor ever was.
 The spirit to the body turns its thought,
 Takes care that it is clothed and has support⁵⁰
 In weakness, that it shuns appalling fears,
 Foresees the useful, learns the various arts, 390
 Consults what Master it shall serve and deem
 Creator of the world and Lord of all.
 But tell me when this genius of the city,
 Of which you speak, first entered newborn Rome.
 Did it flow from the udders of the wolf 395
 And at its birth feed twins in the wooded glen?
 Or with the vultures flying through the air,
 Did it draw sudden being from a cloud?
 Does it rest on the roofs or in the courts?
 Does it establish rules and public laws, 400
 Or does it enter battlefields, call men to arms
 With trumpet sound and hurl them at the foe?
 Would this not merit the laughter of the wise?
 Let us suppose there is a shade or spirit
 That guides the destiny of the commonwealth 405
 And is its vital force, why does the state
 Not to religious worship give more thought,

49 Cf. Symmachus, *Relatio* 8.

50 Cf. Horace, *Epist.* 2.1.136.

Why does it not to heaven freely look,
 Why does it as a captive think its fate
 Is immutable and bound by natal stars, 410
 For now it can refuse what once it chose,
 Give up its errors and reform its faith?
 For seven hundred years it wandered round,
 Not sure what form of government it desired,
 Or what regime would rule with equity. 415
 Kings ruled the city in the early days,
 With elders sharing in authority;
 Soon nobles of high rank were at the helm;
 Plebeian multitudes with equal rights
 Then joined the senators and governed long, 420
 Guiding the state in times of war and peace.
 The consul spoke for lords, tribune for mob.
 This regime soon grew odious and ten men
 Were chosen from the nobles, each of whom
 Was hedged round with twelve fasces and an ax. 425
 Once more two leaders ruled the commonwealth,
 And consuls formed the annual registers;
 An armed triumvirate stained the final age.
 The nation's fate or genius or spirit passed
 Through such rude storms; right rule it learned at last, 430
 And on Augustus' head it placed a crown,
 Naming him father of his country, guide
 Of people and senate, leader in warfare,
 Dictator and just judge, guardian of wealth,
 Avenger of crime, conferrer of dignities.⁵¹ 435
 If through so many steps and varied schemes
 It formed a regime that commands respect
 And public loyalty, why does it fear
 To recognize divine authority,
 Unknown before and only now revealed? 440
 Let us rejoice, for Rome, now thrall to Christ,
 Serves one true God and hates her former cults.

51 Cf. Claudian, *De quarto cons. Hon.* 118.

Rome's men, I mean, in whom her soul resides,
 And not an airy genius you have feigned.
 Why do you say that Rome one genius has, 445
 When you assign a genius to gates, to homes,
 To baths and taverns, and in every place
 Imagine thousands of these geniuses,
 So that no corner is without its shade?
 It follows that a fate may be imposed 450
 On every building and each wall will rise
 Under its proper star, which will decide
 The time of its duration and its fall.
 Men grant to stones Lachesis' flimsy threads,
 They think the wood depends upon her wheel 455
 And to the beams attribute her decrees,
 As if it mattered under what star the tree
 To be uplifted to the roof was felled.
 They say there is no human enterprise,
 No earthly event, but has its destined lot. 460
 Since they think thus, let them explain why laws
 Were on Twelve Tables graved, or why precepts
 Threaten wrongdoers, if an iron fate
 Drives them by force to unavoidable crime.
 By vile suggestions it constrains their will, 465
 So that they have no power to resist.
 Away, harsh laws, if you have any shame,
 Blunt your keen sword that smites the innocent,
 Unlock your prisons where you hold a crowd
 Of blameless men, for fate has done the wrong! 470
 No man has guilt if fate rules life and deeds.⁵²
 The guilty man is he who freely dares
 To sin, for he can choose the right or wrong,
 And fate is not to blame, but man incurs
 Through his free will both guilt and punishment, 475
 Which is his due and is not caused by fate.
 Let him who trusts in fate learn that the stars

52 Cf. Seneca, *Oedipus* 1019.

Prevent no man from recognizing God,
 That astral law does not spurn piety.
 The soul seeks higher things above the stars, 480
 It moves beyond the cloudy ways of fate
 And tramples under foot the false belief
 That at the time of birth its lot is fixed.
 Come hither, all mankind and cities, too,
 A great light calls you; learn to know your Lord! 485
 Free faith lies here, and fate is nought, or if
 It does exist, it flees before Christ's face.

But Rome has won success through many gods;⁵³
 She worships them for triumphs granted her.
 Come, warrior, say who gave you Africa 490
 And Europe; tell the names of all these gods.
 The boon of Jupiter gave you rule of Crete,⁵⁴
 Pallas gave Argos; Cynthus, Delphi;
 Isis gave Egypt; Venus, the Rhodians;
 The huntress maid gave Ephesus; and Mars, 495
 The Hebrus; Bromius, Thebes; Juno allowed
 Her Africans to serve a Phrygian race,
 And that fair city, which 'she fondly aimed,
 Did but the fates permit,'⁵⁵ to make the head
 Of subject tribes, she bade live under Rome. 500
 Did all these fall through treachery of their gods,
 Do altars lie in ruins through their intrigues?
 O loyalty, O sacred faith! These gods
 Have left their native lands and trust is placed
 In deities that earned respect through flight! 505
 Or did the gods attempt to save their people
 And strive to rout the hostile Roman troops,
 But did the greater prowess of the foe

53 Cf. Symmachus, *Relatio* 9; Ambrose, *Epist.* 18.7 (Vol. 26, this series); Tertullian, *op. cit.* 25.2 (Vol. 10, this series); Minucius Felix, *op. cit.* 25.1 (Vol. 10, this series).

54 Cf. Cyprian, *De idolorum vanitate* 4.

55 Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.17-18; Tertullian, *op. cit.* 25.8 (Vol. 10, this series).

Dash them to pieces on the dusty field?
 Yes, it is true, false paganism was crushed 510
 By force of arms, and glory fled from it.
 For people born to war it was not hard
 To break such flimsy forces and to bend
 The yielding necks of gods of every kind.⁵⁶
 Was that a war rude Samnites and Marsians waged 515
 Against the weak Dictean Corybantes?
 Did the Etruscan soldiers fight with guards
 Or athletes smeared with oil for boxing games?
 And Mercury with his headgear could not save
 His wrestling-schools when Lacedaemon fell. 520
 How could Cybeleian troops by eunuch led
 Withstand footsoldiers of the Appennines
 And all of Asia and Ida's mount defend?
 Maybe it was a hard, laborious task
 To rout Idalian roses, lyric bard, 525
 The bow and quiver of the woodland maid,
 And to tread under foot their conquered rites.
 On Actium's flood pipes gave the battle sign⁵⁷
 To Egypt, trumpets to opposing ranks.
 Frail skiffs and shallops forced their Memphian beaks 530
 Amid the towering ships, but powerless
 Were Serapis and barking Anubis.⁵⁸
 The mighty army triumphed, led by chief
 Of Julian line from snowy Algidus.
 No Venus armed, no mailed Minerva helped, 535
 No line of faithless gods exiled from home
 Stood by the hardy Roman warriors;
 Vanquished before, they did not aid our foes,
 If they maintained their old hostility.
 You say gods favored nations where their shrines 540
 Were always blessed by throngs of worshipers,

⁵⁶ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.698.

⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.* 8.675-713.

⁵⁸ Cf. *ibid.* 8.698.

And that the standards of Aeneas' stock
 They followed for the love of royal Numa.
 When her own fortress fell, did Pallas seek⁵⁹
 The tents of Diomede and Ulysses' camp, 545
 Where grief bedewed her statue with a sweat?⁶⁰
 Or when the Macedonian chief piled high
 The smoldering shrines of conquered Amyclae,
 Did captured gods choose to be mixed with spoils
 And carried to Assyrian Babylon? 550
 I cannot bear to slight the name of Rome,
 Her hard-fought wars and trophies won by blood.
 He who ascribes to Venus Rome's great deeds
 Scorns her unconquered arms and prizes gained
 And robs her of the palm of victory. 555
 In vain we hail great generals in their cars
 Placed on the top of a triumphal arch,
 Fabricius, Curius, Drusus, or Camillus,⁶¹
 And under foot the captives on bent knee,
 Bowed to the yoke, hands tied behind their backs, 560
 Their broken darts hung on a laden tree,
 If Flora, Matuta, Ceres, or Laurentina
 Crushed Brennus, Antiochus, Perses, Pyrrhus,
 And Mithridates, 'and through their auspices
 The bird of fortune brought us victory.' 565
 If Apollo's crow with wing or beak gave aid
 To Corvinus, what is valor or renown?
 Why did that crow ignore the tragic day
 When corpses covered Cannae's luckless field?⁶²
 And the consul perished on a heap of dead? 570
 Why on the Cremera's banks did no god warn
 Three hundred Fabii would in battle fall
 And leave scarce one survivor of their race?⁶³

59 Cf. *ibid.* 2.166.

60 Cf. *ibid.* 2.173-174.

61 Cf. Juvenal 8.3.

62 Cf. Claudian, *De bello Gothico* 387.

63 Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 195-242.

Did no Tritonian owl to Carrhae fly
 Advising Crassus of the goddess' help, 575
 Or did no snowy doves the Paphian bring⁶⁴
 To scare the Persian race with her bright zone?

I see what moves you in these instances
 Of ancient gallantry: you say the world
 On land and sea was conquered, you retrace⁶⁵ 580
 The thousands of triumphant victories
 And heavy spoils borne through the midst of Rome.
 Would you, O Roman, have me tell the cause
 Of your success and of the high renown
 That has imposed your yoke upon the world? 585
 God willed to join the peoples and the realms
 Of different languages and hostile cults⁶⁶
 Under the same empire and make all men
 Accept the bonds of one harmonious rule,
 So that religion might unite all hearts; 590
 For there can be no union worthy of Christ
 Unless one spirit reigns throughout the earth.
 Concord alone knows God, alone it pays
 Due homage to the Father: harmony
 Among men wins His blessings for the world, 595
 Discord drives Him away, war saddens Him,
 Peace pleases Him, good will possesses Him.
 In all lands bounded by the western sea
 And brightened by Aurora's shining dawn,
 Bellona was inflaming all mankind 600
 And arming savage hands for mortal wounds.
 To curb this madness, God has everywhere
 Taught nations to accept the selfsame laws
 And Romans to become—all by the Rhine
 And Danube washed,⁶⁷ by Tagus' golden flood, 605

64 Cf. Claudian, *De cons. Stil.* 2.354.

65 Cf. Horace, *Satires* 2.3.2.

66 Cf. Lucan, 3.288; Claudian, *De cons. Stil.* 1.152.

67 Cf. Claudian, *De cons. Stil.* 3.13.

The great Ebro and Hesperia's horned stream,⁶⁸
 The Ganges and warm Nile with seven mouths.⁶⁹
 He bound them by a common law and name
 And brought them into bonds of brotherhood.⁷⁰
 In all the world they live as citizens 610
 Within their native city's sheltering walls,
 United round the same ancestral hearth.
 Tribes far apart and sundered by the sea
 Are brought together through appeals and trials
 In common courts, through their commerce and trades 615
 In crowded marts, through intermarriage
 With those of other climes; for many bloods
 Are intermingled in a single race.
 These are the fruits of all the victories
 Of Roman power: the way, believe me, then 620
 Was ready for Christ's coming, which was built
 By peace and concord under Roman rule.
 Indeed, what place could there have been for God
 In such a savage world and in men's hearts
 Filled with discord and different views of right? 625
 True wisdom visits not the soul of man,
 Nor does God enter it when turmoil reigns
 Within his senses and disordered mind.
 But if the spirit gains supremacy
 And curbs the appetites and rebel flesh, 630
 Subjects the passions all to reason's sway,
 Life then becomes serene, and quiet thoughts
 Attract God to the heart that serves one Lord.

 Come then, Almighty, to this peaceful earth!
 The world united now by peace and Rome 635
 Possesses Thee, O Christ. These two you will
 To rule all things, but not Rome without peace.

68 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.77.

69 Cf. *ibid.* 6.800.

70 Cf. Claudian, *De cons. Stil.* 3.150.

Rome's greatness is the cause of that concord,
 Which pleases Thee, for sovereign power and fear
 Restrain discord and strife. She is not shorn 640
 Of former strength nor weakened by old age;
 She arms no trembling hands at call of war,
 Nor does she with such feeble voice implore
 The emperors, as that senator declares,⁷¹
 Who is adept in speech and shrewd conceits 645
 And makes a false impression with fine words,
 Just as an actor with his wooden mask
 Breathes some great evil through its gaping mouth.

If I may take the part of Rome, the words
 I speak now in her name befit her more. 650
 Since she disdains to mourn her banished gods,
 To say the aegis fought for her in war
 And that she faints beneath the weight of years,
 She hails her princes in a joyful voice:
 'I greet you, famous leaders, noble sons 655
 Of an unconquered emperor under whom
 I shed old age and saw my silver hair
 Turn gold again: time blights all mortal things,
 But length of days has given me new life,
 And I have learned to have no fear of death. 660
 At last my years are shown due reverence;
 I merit the name of mistress of the world,
 When now an olive spray my helmet crowns,
 And verdant garlands veil my grim sword-belt,
 While, armed, I worship God without bloodshed. 665
 Dark Jupiter led me on to crime, alas,
 And I profaned my sword, inured to war,
 With holy blood of martyrs slain by me.
 Nero, inspired by him, his mother killed,
 Then drank the Apostles' blood, soiled my fair name 670
 With blood of saints and marked me with his crimes.

⁷¹ Cf. Symmachus, *Relatio* 9.

Then Decius, reveling in his holocausts,
 Sated his cruel rage; soon others burned
 With thirst to take the lives of noble men
 Through grievous wounds and tragic punishments, 675
 To pour into my heart a stream of deaths⁷²
 And cut off innocent heads by court decrees.
 Your reign alone has cleansed me of this guilt.
 My life is holy now, once impious
 Through Jove, I must confess. What cruelty 680
 Did he not teach, what good did he demand?
 Alarmed at seeing praise of Christ take root,
 He burned with wrath and stained the world with blood.⁷³
 Some dare to blame us for disastrous wars,
 Since we have spurned the altars of the gods, 685
 And say that Hannibal was driven back⁷⁴
 By Mars and Jupiter from the Colline Gate,
 That from the Capitol Senones fled
 Because the gods fought on the rock above!
 Let those who harp upon our past defeats 690
 And ancient woes note that in your regime
 I suffer no such ills. No savage foe
 Knocks at my gates, no strange barbarian
 Roams through my captured streets and carries off
 My youth in bondage far beyond the Alps. 695

 'Of late a Getic king from Danube land
 Tried to lay waste to Italy and swore⁷⁵
 To raze our citadels, burn our fair shrines,
 And clothe our togaed lords in skins of beasts.
 Already he had marched across Venetian fields 700
 And ravaged rich Liguria, and now
 Beyond the Po was pressing on Tuscan soil:

72 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 10.908.

73 Cf. *ibid.* 2.502.

74 Cf. Ambrose, *Epist.* 18.4 (Vol. 26, this series); Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.655-656.

75 Cf. Claudian, *De bello Gothico* 81.

No watchful goose drove back the clouds of horse,⁷⁶
 Betrayer of the peril in darkness hid,
 But men's rude strength, hearts pierced in battle,⁷⁷ 705
 And courage to face death for fatherland
 And to achieve renown mid glorious wounds.⁷⁸
 Did that day bring reward for gallantry
 Through power of Jove? To lead our troops we had
 A youth, mighty in Christ, and Stilicho 710
 His guide and father, and Christ was God of both.
 Prayer at Christ's altar and the sign of the cross
 Foreran the trumpet call: the crest of Christ,
 Borne high above the dragons, went before.
 The tribe for thirty years Pannonia's scourge⁷⁹ 715
 Was then wiped out and paid due penalty.
 The bodies once adorned with shameful spoils
 Now lie in heaps; in centuries to come
 Posterity will marvel at the dead
 Whose bones have overspread Pollentia's fields.⁸⁰ 720
 If from the ashes I could lift my head,
 By Gauls laid low, if, smoking still, with joy
 I hailed my standards at Camillus' return,
 If I could deck my dismal halls with wreaths
 And with festoons of bay gird crumbling towers, 725
 What welcome shall I give you, noble prince,
 What flowers strew, what garlands hang in halls,⁸¹
 What banners from my festive portals wave,
 I who was free from war, and through your arms⁸²
 The Gothic onslaught only reached my ears? 730
 Mount your triumphal chariot, take your spoils,
 And hither come with Christ! Let me remove

76 Cf. Ambrose, *Epist.* 18.5 (Vol. 26, this series).

77 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 11.614.

78 Cf. *ibid.* 11.647.

79 Cf. Claudian, *De bello Gothico* 634.

80 Cf. Horace, *Satires* 1.8.16.

81 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.884.

82 Cf. *ibid.* 12.559.

The chains from captive throngs, let fall your fetters,⁸³
 Worn smooth in bondage, matrons and young men!
 Let the old man, exiled from home forget 735
 His slavery, let the child know he is free,
 Now that his mother has returned, let fear
 Be banished:⁸⁴ we rejoice in victory.
 Was such good fortune ours when Carthage's chief
 Was routed? After he dashed at our gate, 740
 Weakened at Baiae's springs, he lost his strength
 In revelry and broke his sword through lust.
 But Stilicho in hand to hand conflict
 Compelled the ironclad troops to flee from battle.
 Here, Christ our God and valor favored us, 745
 There, thy delights, Campania, overcame
 The wanton foe; bold Fabius was not helped
 By Jupiter, but he subdued a tyrant
 Already vanquished by Tarentum's charms.
 I do not have a worthy recompense⁸⁵ 750
 For these great services: to honor you
 With statues would be idle, for what time
 Destroys is worthless; bronze corrodes, bright gold
 Decays, the sheen of silver vanishes
 And rust and grime discolor precious ores. 755
 You merit a living monument, O prince,
 For you have sought a glory without end.
 Lord of the world, you always will be joined
 To Christ and lead my realm to heavenly heights.
 Do not be moved by that great orator 760
 Who as my legate mourns for rites now dead,
 And dares attack our faith with all his powers⁸⁶
 Of mind and speech, alas, nor does he see
 That you and I are vowed to God, Augustus,
 And pagan shrines and altars are ignored. 765

83 Cf. Claudian, *De bello Gothico* 616.

84 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 11.14.

85 Cf. Claudian, *De bello Gildonico* 52.

86 Cf. Claudian, *De bello Gothico* 87.

Let Christ alone defend and rule our halls,
 Let no fell demon know the towers of Rome,⁸⁷
 But may my court adore the God of peace.'

So speaking, Rome has moved her pious chiefs
 To spurn that delegate's distasteful plea, 770
 For from the shrine of Jupiter he was sent,
 Not by his country, which gives glory to Christ.
 Yet he persists in saying that the routes
 For seeking one true God are manifold;⁸⁸
 That some men seek Him here, some seek Him there, 775
 Each by a separate path, but all the ways
 Join in the end and come together as one;⁸⁹
 That sky and earth, wind, sea, and clouds are given
 To all alike, to those who worship Thee,
 O Christ, and those who sacrifice to stones. 780
 The air, stars, ocean, earth, and rain are held
 By all in common, I do not deny.⁹⁰
 Beneath one sky the just and the unjust⁹¹
 All dwell, the good and evil breathe one air,
 The chaste and the unchaste, the wedded bride 785
 And harlot, and the breath that governs life
 For priest and gladiator is the same.
 The rain cloud driven by the wind in spring
 Revives the fields of thief and saint alike.
 The traveler and the robber seek pure springs 790
 When tired in summer heat, the sea sustains
 The pirate and the merchant, waves obey
 A foe and bear the thwarts of peaceful ships.
 Nature, with power of good or ill, provides
 For man's creation and has no regard 795
 For merit, since her sole task is nourishment.

87 Cf. Claudian, *De cons. Stil.* 3.124.

88 Cf. Symmachus, *Relatio* 10.

89 Cf. Claudian, *In Rufinium* 1.295.

90 Cf. Matt. 5.45.

91 Cf. Tertullian, *op. cit.* 41.3 (Vol. 10, this series).

The world sustains, it does not judge; the Lord
 Of nature keeps this function for Himself.
 Men now enjoy on like terms the gifts
 Once granted them: springs flow and rivers flood, 800
 The sail-winged sea is cut by ships, the rain⁹²
 Showers down, the breezes fly, the air is brisk,
 And nature's goods are common to all men,
 Long as the elements keep their lawful course,
 And so the good man and the criminal 805
 Enjoy alike the stars and genial sky.
 To live is common, but desert is not.
 The Roman, Dahan, Sarmatian, Vandal, Hun,
 Gaetulian, German, Saxon, Galaudian,
 All walk one earth, the one same sky possess, 810
 And ocean that surrounds our whole wide world.⁹³
 Nay more: the animals drink at our springs;
 The dew gives corn to me that gives the grass
 To asses, the filthy sow bathes in our stream.
 Dogs breathe the air that animates wild beasts. 815
 But Roman differs from barbarian
 As quadruped from biped, dumb from speaking,
 And those who follow God's precepts are far
 From foolish cults and superstitious rites,
 So sharing air and sky does not create 820
 The same religion; it alone sustains
 Their bodies and provides for new offspring.
 Their kind, their form, their merit matters not,
 Provided that these frames are born from earth
 And draw their strength from earthly elements, 825
 Because the Father's gifts are shed on all
 Without distinction and with boundless flow,⁹⁴
 And were conferred before the first man sinned.
 They are not lessened by the users' faults,

92 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.574.

93 Cf. Lucan 1.110.

94 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.574.

Nor do they shun the shameful and the foul. 830
 Likewise, the sun's ray, when it sheds
 Its light in every place, strikes golden roofs,
 But also shines on thatch begrimed with smoke.
 It enters the shining marble Capitol,
 But also enters cracks in prison holds, 835
 In dung-heap screens and filthy dens of vice.
 Yet gloomy prisons will not be the same
 As royal ceilings fretted with bright gold.⁹⁵
 Those who seek gods in urns and tombs, and shades
 Appease with blood, are not the same as those 840
 Who worship the Lord of heaven in righteousness
 And beautify the temple of their heart.
 The secret of mysterious truth, he says,⁹⁶
 Cannot be sought except by many paths
 And scattered ways, and in the search for God 845
 Man must traverse a hundred different roads.
 Far other is the truth; for wandering round
 Leads to confusion and uncertainty;
 One way alone is from all error free,
 That with no curves and treacherous bypaths. 850

Yet I confess that at all times two paths
 Confront us and that mankind walks two ways,
 Not knowing where his faltering step may lead.
 One way is many-branched, the other straight:
 One leads to God, one follows many gods 855
 And has as many forks as images
 In shrines, or monstrous phantoms flying round.
 It leads some to wand-bearing Bacchus' rites,
 Draws others to the Saturnalian feast,
 Or shows the worship claimed by infant Jove⁹⁷ 860
 In hiding mid the cymbals' ringing sound.

⁹⁵ Cf. Statius, *Thebaid* 1.144.

⁹⁶ Cf. Ambrose, *Epist.* 18.8 (Vol. 26, this series).

⁹⁷ Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.207-214.

They seek the Lupercalian whips of youth
 Who naked run about, and oracles
 The frenzied Megalesian eunuch speaks.⁹⁸
 Some men, prepared to travel shorter roads, 865
 Adore mean plants from gardens by the Nile,
 Set leeks and onions in the clouds as gods⁹⁹
 And garlic and mustard¹⁰⁰ place above the stars.
 For Isis, Serapis, Ape, and Crocodile
 Are one with Juno, Laverna, and Priapus: 870
 Those Nile adores, these Tiber venerates,
 One error, though each wears a different hue.¹⁰¹
 Shrouded by brush, another pathway looms
 Which cattle and dumb woodland creatures tread,
 Where blinded man knows nought of heavenly things 875
 And lives a captive to a savage fiend.
 He thinks there is no God, that all by chance
 Is ruled, and ages roll without a guide.¹⁰²
 This path is not far distant from the ways
 You travel who believe in many gods, 880
 A monstrous throng of major deities.
 God is the guide along a single way;
 He bids mankind to follow one high road
 That leads up lofty slopes upon the right.
 The path at first is rough, forbidding, dark, 885
 And arduous, but pleasant at the end,
 Replete with riches and eternal light,
 Which amply pay for labors of the past.
 Of many tangled paths upon the left
 The fiend is guide: this way the bearded sage 890
 He drags, that way the man of wealth and fame;

98 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.376.

99 Cf. Juvenal 15.9.11.

100 Bergman, following the MSS, has *serapen*, 'Serapis,' here. Meyer ('Prudentiana,' *Philologus* 87.349) holds that *senapin* 'Mustard' is a better reading.

101 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 12.8.17.

102 Cf. Juvenal 13.86-88.

With tongues of birds and spells he lures them on,¹⁰³
 Incites them with a Sibyl's mutterings,
 Drives them to sorcery and magic arts
 And frightens them with lying auguries. 895
 Do you not see one way with many forks,
 Ruled by a guide who will not let you go
 To salvation's Lord, but shows the road to death
 Along byways with fleeting joys strewn
 That end in deep Charybdis' mournful pool?¹⁰⁴ 900
 Pagans, depart! You have no right to share
 The way with people of God; go far away,
 Immerse yourselves in darkness, where that guide
 Calls you along the path of infernal night.
 We have one way who seek the Lord of life, 905
 The way of light, clear day and simple grace.
 We walk by hope and faith, seek joys to come,
 To which those of this life cannot compare,
 For bliss attained does not match that to be.

This is the senator's last sad complaint, 910
 That meal to Pallas' altars is denied,
 Pay to the Vestals, aid to youthful choirs,
 That Vesta's fires are cheated of upkeep.
 For this, he says, dry fields bear scanty crops,¹⁰⁵
 Dread famine rages, and throughout the world 915
 Mankind grows pale from want and lack of food.
 What cruel famine has appeared today,¹⁰⁶
 Sent by Triptolemus and Ceres, wroth
 And vengeful at the Vestal's loss of aid,
 I cannot think, nor is there any word. 920
 I hear the Nile spreads over Egyptian fields
 And floods as usual green Canopus' corn.¹⁰⁷

103 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.361.

104 Cf. Matt. 7.13,14; Sir. (Ecclus.) 21.10,11.

105 Cf. Symmachus, *Relatio* 11-13.

106 Cf. *ibid.* 15-17; Ambrose, *Epist.* 18.20-21 (Vol. 26, this series).

107 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 4.287-288.

News that the river is dry would have been brought,
 That parched and dusty barren Memphis lies,
 And the Pelusian marsh exhales no fogs. 925
 Or has the river's hidden source dried up
 So that the spring pours forth a meagre stream?
 Has it turned back, refusing to wash our shores,
 And bent its course to torrid Indian lands?¹⁰⁸
 Does the dry bed drink up the stream midway, 930
 Or sudden crevice swallow up the flood
 And keep the tide from covering furrowed lands
 And spreading over Egypt's arid plains,
 Softening the clods with penetrating surge,
 So that the corn may wave on ample fields 935
 And clothe them thickly with the heavy ears?¹⁰⁹
 See whether African farmers cease to load
 Their ships with grain and send their stacks of wheat
 To Tiber's mouth to feed the multitude,
 Or Leontinian tillers of the soil 940
 Stop launching grain cargoes from Lilybaeum,
 Or fleets that bring Sardinian stores to burst
 The granaries of Rome no longer sail.¹¹⁰
 Do Carthaginian yeomen heap their boards
 With woodland pears, Sicilians feed on roots, 945
 Sardinians furnish acorns from their oaks
 And stony cornels form the food of Rome?¹¹¹
 Who now comes hungry to the circus shows?
 What district suffers want from empty steps,
 What mill is silent on Janiculum?¹¹² 950
 What great provisions every province brings,
 What harvests from the earth's rich bosom flow
 Is shown by bread you give your people, Rome,
 Which feeds the sloth of such great multitudes.

108 Cf. *ibid.* 293.

109 Cf. Claudian, *De raptu Pros.* 1.190.

110 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.49.

111 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.649-650; *Georgics* 1.300; 2.34; Tibullus 2.1.38

112 Public grain-mills were located on the Janiculum.

That one year is less fruitful than the last 955
 Is nothing strange or novel in this world:
 Our fathers often learned to suffer want
 When wind and burning sun dried up the clouds
 And frequent rain did not pour showers in spring
 On young green crops; when corn matured 960
 Before the tender grains had swelled with milk,
 For sap was checked by hot winds from the east,
 So that the stalks were bare, and sterile straw
 Deceived and brought the farmer's hopes to nought.
 The land was prone to failures such as these 965
 Ere the Palladium and Vesta saved
 The household gods of Troy with hidden fire,¹¹³
 Before the sire of Priam built his walls,
 Before the maiden Pallas Athens raised,
 For in these cities, as they say, was lit 970
 The Vestal fire, caught from the primal spark,
 And sacred hearths by Trojans and Greeks were fed.¹¹⁴
 The elements fail because of ancient sin,
 And driven from their normal course, they bring
 Mishaps contrary to the yearly law. 975
 Now rust, caused by bad air, devours the crop,
 Now after west winds in a sunny spring
 A cold blast from the north bombards the corn
 And taints the blighted grain with sooty smut,
 Or as the blade sprouts from the tender seed, 980
 It is destroyed by frequent killing frosts
 And cannot thrust its root into the soil;
 Pushed from the earth by penetrating cold,
 The bare stem lies uncovered on the ground.
 Then thorny caltraps and the thistles grow, 985
 One caused by drought, and one by too much rain.
 The weather more or less extreme gives rise
 To all these ills of earth and wounds the world.

113 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 5.743-744.

114 Cf. *ibid.* 2.293-297.

Likewise, the body's evil conduct leads
 To sickness, and neglect of nature's laws 990
 Afflicts the members through want of control.
 The order of the world and of our frame
 Is one; the selfsame nature upholds both.
 From nothing made, they grow, doomed to return
 To nothing and succumb to disease or age; 995
 Not free from fault is nature that will end.
 Trust me, the sky has always woven years
 Of varied fruitfulness: some with rich crops
 It has endowed, some doomed to barrenness
 That rendered vain the farmer's hope and toil. 1000
 But if this drought caused by a fickle earth
 Avenges now the wrongs of Vestal maids,
 Why are not fields of Christians only spoiled,
 Through whom your virgins' stipends are refused?
 We profit from the tillage of our land 1005
 And fret not at our toil: and if a stone
 Stood there that pagans once with ribbons bound
 Or worshiped with the lung of victim hen,
 It has been shattered; Terminus is profaned,
 And vengeful ax has felled the tree once decked 1010
 With fillets that upheld the smoking lamps.
 And yet the yield from farmlands is not less,
 Nor sunny weather less serene and bright,
 Nor wind decreased that showers fields with rain.
 Our frugal lives do not have many needs, 1015
 And when crops thrive we are not overjoyed,
 Nor do we take delight in sordid gain.
 To those who place their hope in endless joy
 The good things of this present life are slight.
 Thrice happy is the prudent husbandman¹¹⁵ 1020
 Who tills his land and soul and spends on both
 Unsleeping care, like laborers in the field
 Whom Christ, the Master, taught by these precepts:

115 Cf. *ibid.* 4.657; *Georgics* 2.458; Horace, *Satires* 2.2.3.

'When you in furrows sow your seed, avoid¹¹⁶
 The rocky ground and let no seed fall there, 1025
 Because at first the shoot will make quick growth,
 But when the sap withdraws, the thirsty plant
 Will be all withered by the fiery sun.¹¹⁷
 Let seeds not fall among the thorny shrubs¹¹⁸
 For their sharp sprays mix with the growing corn, 1030
 And piercing brambles choke the tender stalks.¹¹⁹
 Then on the highway scatter not the grains¹²⁰
 For these lie bare to be devoured by birds¹²¹
 And are abandoned to the sport of crows.'
 God guides the farmer by these wise precepts; 1035
 The plowman heeds the Heavenly Father's law,
 But plans his crops both of his soul and land
 So that his heart will not shine less within
 Than bounteous harvests in his smiling fields.
 For we root out the briars from the heart 1040
 Lest vicious brambles kill the living sprout,
 Lest prickly thorns of crime and evil choke
 The harvest of the soul with frequent sin,
 Lest rocky barren sand dry up the faith¹²²
 That withers in the heart, or passion burn
 Within the breast and scorch the gifts of grace,
 Lest base desire leave little place for God,
 Lest hope on which our inner spirit is fed
 Be given as food to unclean birds, and faith
 Be cast away as prey of our winged foe. 1050
 Such care will cause our fields to bring forth fruit
 A hundredfold,¹²³ when ardently pursued
 Without fear that the worms may gnaw the store

116 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.223.

117 Cf. Matt. 13.5,6.

118 Cf. Matt. 13.7.

119 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.76.

120 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 5.273.

121 Cf. Matt. 13.4.

122 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 2.212.

123 Cf. Matt. 13.8.

Or black ants lay it up deep in their holes.¹²⁴
 Our virgins are endowed with splendid gifts:¹²⁵ 1055
 Reserve, face hidden with a holy veil,
 Integrity and charm not seen abroad,
 Frugal repasts and spirit always calm,
 And vow of chastity that ends with life.
 Hence fruit a hundredfold comes to their barns,¹²⁶ 1060
 Barns not exposed to thieves that prowl at night,
 For no thief enters heaven, and celestial doors
 Are not unlocked by fraud, which dwells on earth.

How worthy is the Vestals' chastity,
 I now shall prove, and how it is observed. 1065
 First, they are chosen in their tender years
 Before the love of chastity and the gods
 Inclines them of their own free will and choice
 To spurn the lawful bonds of marriage.
 Their purity is on thankless altars placed, 1070
 And joys of flesh are absent, not from scorn,
 But from loss; the body, not the mind, is pure,
 Nor does the bed bring rest on which the maid¹²⁷
 Laments her wound and loss of nuptial ties.
 Since hope remains, love's fire does not grow cold, 1075
 For one day wedding torches may be lit,
 And graying heads may wear the bridal veil.
 For an appointed time Vesta enjoins
 Virginity, but scorns a chaste old age.
 While youthful vigor favored marriage bonds, 1080
 Love was not made fruitful in motherhood.
 Her sacred task fulfilled, the Vestal weds;
 She leaves behind the hearth her youth has served,
 And brings her wrinkles to the nuptial couch,
 Where only tepid joys are known to her. 1085

¹²⁴ Cf. Matt. 6.19; Vergil, *Georgics* 1.185.

¹²⁵ Cf. Ambrose, *Epist.* 18.12 (Vol. 26, this series).

¹²⁶ Cf. Matt. 13.8.

¹²⁷ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.600.

But while the fillet binds her flowing locks,
 And the virgin priestess tends prophetic fires,
 She is borne through the streets with solemn pomp,
 Reclining in a cushioned car,¹²⁸ and shows
 Her unveiled face to wondering eyes of Rome. 1090
 Thence in her chaste and bloodless piety
 She to the amphitheatre goes to view
 The bloody fights and human deaths, and looks
 With holy eyes on wounds received for bread.¹²⁹
 She sits there, fillet crowned, enjoying the shows. 1095
 O soft and tender heart! At blows she stands,
 And when a victor stabs his rival's throat,
 She calls him her delight;¹³⁰ the gentle maid
 Bids him by thumb turned up to strike his foe,¹³¹
 So that no breath of life may in him stay, 1100
 While from the thrust he gasps in agony.
 Does their fame lie in this, that they always
 Keep watch for Rome's imperial majesty,
 That they protect the people and the lords,
 That they dispose their tresses on their necks, 1105
 And bind their brows with snoods and braid their hair,¹³²
 Because, with ghosts as witness under ground,
 They slay the ox above the flames and pray?¹³³
 Is it that, from their seats in the balcony,
 They see the blows of the three-pronged javelin strike 1110
 The gladiator's face, and from his wounds
 How he bedews the arena on his side
 And prints his tracks with blood as he withdraws?¹³⁴

128 Cf. Ambrose, *Epist.* 18.11-12 (Vol. 26, this series); Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.665-666.

129 Free men often volunteered as gladiators and received pay for their services.

130 The heroes of the arena were especially the ladies favorites; cf. Tertullian, *Spectacles* 95n. (Vol. 40, this series).

131 Cf. Juvenal 3.36-37.

132 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.185.

133 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 11.199; 12.214; Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 5.7 (Vol. 40, this series).

134 Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 3.171.

I pray you, lord of the Ausonian realm,
 That golden Rome may know such crimes no more, 1115
 And that this rite be banned like all the rest.
 Does not your father's glory lack this crown,
 Which God and paternal love have kept for you?
 That he alone might not receive the praise
 For this great boon, he said: 'My son, I keep 1120
 A part for you,' and left the honor all to you.
 Accept, O prince, this glory of your reign,
 And as your father's heir, receive this praise.
 He banned the deluge of Rome with blood of bulls:
 Do you forbid grim human sacrifice. 1125
 Let no man die in Rome as sport for crowds,
 Nor Vestals feast their eyes on cruel deaths.
 Now let the circus be content with beasts
 And slaughter of men no longer entertain.¹³⁵
 Let Rome praise God and honor her great prince, 1130
 Let her be just and free from every crime,
 Let her be like her chief in piety.

135 The emperor, Honorius, abolished the gladiatorial combats in 404.

*SCENES FROM SACRED
HISTORY, OR TWOFOLD
NOURISHMENT*

(TITULI HISTORIARUM, QUI 'DITTOCHAEI'
NOMINE CIRCUMFERUNTUR)

SCENES FROM SACRED HISTORY, OR
TWOFOLD NOURISHMENT

1. *Adam and Eve*

In the beginning Eve was as white as a dove, but was after
Stained by the serpent's dark venom when he enticed
her to evil,
And in turn she infected with foul taint the innocent
Adam;
Then the victorious snake gives them fig leaves to
cover their nudeness.¹

2. *Cain and Abel*

God receives in a different manner the gifts of two
brothers,²
Giving approval to animal life and rejecting the earth's
fruits.
Out of envy the husbandman slays the shepherd: In Abel
Is the type of the soul; in the offering of Cain, that of body.

5

3. *Noe and the Flood*

As a sign that the flood had abated the dove is now
bringing

1 Cf. Gen. 3.6-21.

2 Cf. Gen. 4.3-5.

Back to the ark in her beak the budding green branch
 of an olive.³ 10
 For the raven, held captive by gluttony, clung to foul
 bodies,⁴
 While the dove brought back the glad tidings of peace
 that was given.

4. *Abraham and His Guest*

This is the lodging place of the Lord, where an oak
 branch at Mambre⁵
 Covered the pastoral roof of the ancient seer; in this
 hospice
 Sara laughed at the joy of bearing a child in her old age 15
 And at the faith her venerable husband could have in
 the marvel.

5. *The Tomb of Sara*

Abraham purchased a field wherein he might bury his
 wife's bones,⁶
 Inasmuch as justice and faith on the earth dwell
 as strangers:
 This is the cave for which he expended a great sum
 of money,⁷
 To prepare a fit resting place for his wife's holy ashes.⁸ 20

³ Cf. Gen. 8.8,11.

⁴ Cf. Gen. 8.7.

⁵ Cf. Gen. 18.1,10.

⁶ Cf. Gen. 23.4,16.

⁷ Cf. Horace, *Epist.* 2.2.165.

⁸ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.495; 7.598.

6. *The Dream of Pharao*

Seven ears of corn twice appearing to Pharao in slumber⁹
 And a like number of cattle foretell by their differing
 symbols¹⁰
 Times of plenty and famine disposed in seven year
 periods.
 This is the meaning the patriarch gave through
 Christ's revelation.

7. *Joseph Recognized by His Brothers*

Sold through a plot of his brothers, that same boy
 in secret¹¹ 25
 Gives command that a cup in a sack of grain should
 be hidden;
 Then when Joseph arrests them for theft, their betrayal
 is made known.¹²
 Recognizing their brother, they are put to shame by
 his pardon.¹³

8. *The Burning Bush*

God in the form of a flame that hovered over the briers,¹⁴
 With His face all glorious, called to a youth who
 was guarding 30
 Flocks at the time; as bidden, the youth lifts his rod
 now a serpent;¹⁵

⁹ Cf. Gen. 41.17-31.

¹⁰ Cf. Claudian, *De raptu Pros.* 2.45.

¹¹ Cf. Gen. 37.28.

¹² Cf. Gen. 44.2-12.

¹³ Cf. Gen. 45.3,4.

¹⁴ Cf. Exod. 3.2.

¹⁵ Cf. Exod. 4.3.

He unfastens his shoes and to Pharaoh's court he then
hurries.¹⁶

9. *The Passage of the Sea*

Safely the upright man makes his way even through
the deep waters.¹⁷

Lo, for the servants of God the Red Sea is parted asunder,
While the same billows engulf the frenzied plotters of evil. 35
Pharaoh is overwhelmed, but the path lay open for Moses.

10. *Moses has Received the Law*

With the celestial fire the top of the mountain is
smoking,¹⁸

Where the tables of stone with the ten commandments
are given

Unto Moses; receiving the Law he returns to his people,
But their god is a golden calf, a god made of metal.¹⁹ 40

11. *The Manna and the Quails*

By the bread of angels the tents of our fathers are
whitened.²⁰

Faith in this wonder is sure; for a golden vessel holds
manna

Kept since that time;²¹ another cloud now descends on
the ingrates,

And the flocks of quails satisfy their hunger for fleshpots.²²

16 Cf. Exod. 3.5; 7.9.

17 Cf. Exod. 14.27-29.

18 Cf. Exod. 19.18.

19 Cf. Exod. 32.7.

20 Cf. Exod. 16.14.

21 Cf. Exod. 16.33,34.

22 Cf. Exod. 16.13.

12. *The Brazen Serpent in the Wilderness*

On the dry way through the wilderness fiery serpents
 were swarming,²³ 45
 And their venomous bites made wounds that were killing
 the people,
 But a brazen serpent is hung on a cross by their leader
 To remove all the strength of the venom and heal the
 afflicted.

13. *The Pool of Myrrh in the Wilderness*

To the thirsting people the taste of the pool was revolting,²⁴
 For as bitter as gall were the stagnant waters it contained. 50
 Saintly Moses instructs them: 'Bring me a piece of that
 firewood;
 Throw it into the pool and the gall will be turned into
 sweetness.'

14. *The Grove of Elim in the Wilderness*

Led by Moses the people came to a grove with six
 fountains²⁵
 And six others again that with their crystalline waters
 Flooded the seventy palm trees; that mystic oasis of Elim 55
 Was a symbol also of the number of apostles in Scripture.

15. *The Twelve Stones in the Jordan*

Jordan with reflux stream to its source is carried
 back swiftly,

²³ Cf. Num. 21.6-9.

²⁴ Cf. Exod. 15.23-25.

²⁵ Cf. Exod. 15.27.

Leaving the people of God a dry path to be trod in
 their crossing;²⁶
 You may see here the twelve stones that our fathers set
 in the river
 To prefigure the twelve disciples one day to be chosen.²⁷ 60

16. *The House of Rahab the Harlot*

Jericho has fallen and Rahab's house only is standing.²⁸
 Hostess of holy men, the harlot—so great is faith's
 virtue—
 Safe in her unscathed home, exposes the cord of bright
 scarlet
 In the face of the flames as a sign of the blood of salvation.

17. *Samson*

Samson resistless because of his hair is attacked by a lion;²⁹ 65
 When he killed the wild beast, from its mouth there
 flowed streams of honey,
 And from an ass's jawbone comes forth a fountain of water:
 Folly with water overflows and virtue with sweetness.

18. *Samson*

Samson catches three hundred foxes and arms them
 with firebrands,³⁰
 Which he ties to their tails, and he lets them go into the
 cornfields 70

²⁶ Cf. Jos. 3.14-17.

²⁷ Cf. Jos. 4.8.

²⁸ Cf. Jos. 2.1,18-21; 6.17,25.

²⁹ Cf. Judges, 14.5-8; 15.19.

³⁰ Cf. Judges 15.4,5.

Of the Philistines to burn their crops: thus the fox of
false doctrine
Cunningly scatters the flames of heresy over our vineyards.

19. *David*

David was young, the last of his brothers and now as
he guarded
Jesse's flocks, he was tuning the harp that was soon to
give pleasure
To the king.³¹ In the course of time he wages fierce battles 75
And with a whizzing sling he defeats the giant Goliath.³²

20. *The Reign of David*

David's royal insignia shine with marvelous brightness:
Scepter and oil and crown, robe of purple and altar,
They are all proper to Christ, the mantle and crown and
the scepter,
Symbol of power, the horn of the cross, the altar and oil. 80

21. *The Building of the Temple*

Wisdom builds up a temple through Solomon's faithful
obedience,
And the queen of the South brings hither a heap of
gold talents.³³
For the time is at hand when Christ shall build his own
temple
In the heart of man to be revered by Greeks and
barbarians.

³¹ Cf. 1 Kings 16.17-23.

³² Cf. 1 Kings 17.49,50.

³³ Cf. 3 Kings 10.1-10.

22. *The Sons of the Prophets*

While the sons of the prophets chanced to be cutting
 down timber³⁴ 85
 On the banks of the river, an axe-head fell from its
 handle.
 Down to the bottom the iron sank, but a piece of
 light firewood,
 Thrown into the water, soon brought it again to the
 surface.

23. *The Hebrews Led into Captivity*

Captive because of their many transgressions the race
 of the Hebrews
 Mourned their sad exile by the cruel rivers of Babylon;³⁵ 90
 They disregarded the order to sing the songs of their
 nation,
 Hanging their tuneful harps on the bitter willow tree's
 branches.³⁶

24. *The House of King Ezechias*

Pious Ezechias merited here the delay for fifteen years³⁷
 Of the day of his death that the will of God had
 appointed;³⁸
 This was confirmed by the sun as it turned to the
 eastern horizon, 95
 Shedding its light on the spaces the evening shadows
 had covered.

³⁴ Cf. 4 Kings 6.5-7.

³⁵ Cf. Ps. 136.1.

³⁶ Cf. Ps. 136.2; Vergil, *Eclogues* 1.78.

³⁷ Cf. 4 Kings 20.1-11.

³⁸ Cf. Seneca, *Hercules furens* 190.

25. *The Angel Gabriel is Sent to Mary*

When God's coming draws near,³⁹ the angel Gabriel
 advances
 From the Father's high throne and enters the house
 of the virgin.
 'Mary,' he says, 'the Holy Spirit will render thee fruitful,
 And thou shalt give birth to the Christ, O glorious
 Virgin.'⁴⁰

100

26. *The City of Bethlehem*

Head of the world is holy Bethlehem that brought forth
 Jesus,⁴¹
 Source of creation and fountain Himself of every
 beginning.
 This is the city that gave birth to Christ as man, yet
 the Christ lived
 Ever as God ere the sun or the morning star was created.

27. *The Gifts of the Magi*

Here the Magi bring to the Christ child, nursed by
 the Virgin,⁴²
 Precious offerings of myrrh and of gold and of
 sweet-smelling incense.
 That such great reverence is shown to her chaste womb,
 the mother now marvels.
 And that she has borne the God-Man, who is King
 of Creation.

105

³⁹ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.258.

⁴⁰ Cf. Luke 1.26-33.

⁴¹ Cf. Matt. 2.6.

⁴² Cf. Matt. 2.11; Juvenecus 1.282-86 (PL 19.98).

28. *The Shepherds Warned by the Angels*

Light angelic bedazzles the watchful eyes of the
 shepherds,⁴³
 Making known the good tidings that Christ has been born
 of a virgin. 110
 They find Him wrapped in swaddling clothes, and His
 crib was a manger;
 They exult with great joy and kneeling, they worship
 his Godhead.

29. *The Massacre of the Infants at Bethlehem*

Herod, the impious enemy, slaughters innumerable
 infants,⁴⁴
 As he furiously rages in search of the Christ-child
 among them.
 Cradles reek with the milky blood of the innocent
 children 115
 And the hot gashes moisten the loving breasts of the
 mothers.

30. *The Baptism of Christ*

John the Baptist, sustained by locusts and honey
 from woodlands
 And attired in a mantle of camel's hair was baptizing
 In the stream; he had baptized Christ when the Spirit
 from heaven
 Witnessed that He who was baptized forgives the sins
 of the baptized.⁴⁵ 120

⁴³ Cf. Luke 2.8-20.

⁴⁴ Cf. Matt. 2.16.

⁴⁵ Cf. Matt. 3.13-17.

31. *The Pinnacle of the Temple*

Still the pinnacle stands, outlasting the temple's
destruction,
For the corner raised up from that stone which the
builders rejected⁴⁶
Will remain throughout all ages forever and ever;
Now it is head of the temple and holds the new stones
together.

32. *Water Changed into Wine*

Once the Galileans were celebrating a marriage,⁴⁷ 125
Crowded with witnesses, when the servants saw the
wine failing;
Christ bids them quickly fill the water-pots with clear
water,
And an abundance of mellow wine is now poured from
the tankards.

33. *The Pool of Siloe*

Cure for disease is that water which by the Spirit is
stirred up
In a dark manner at various hours; Siloe men called it.⁴⁸ 130
Here the Savior anointed the eyes of the blind man with
spittle,
And He bade him to go and wash in that fountain of water.

46 Cf. Matt. 4.5-7; 21.42. Commenting on the ambiguity of this quatrain, Lavarenne suggests that it may refer to the temptation of Christ when Satan took Him up to the pinnacle of the temple, or to the discourse of Christ in the temple recounted in Chapter 21 of St. Matthew's Gospel.

47 Cf. John 2.1-10.

48 Cf. John 5.3,4; 9.6-11. Prudentius here confuses the pool of Siloe with that at Bethsaida, as in the *Apothesis* 1.680. (Cf. *supra*, p. 28).

34. *The Passion of John the Baptist*

Sinister tribute the dancing girl demands as her guerdon,⁴⁹
 Head of the Baptist cut off to carry back on a platter
 To the lap of her shameless mother; the royal performer 135
 Bears the gift, with her hands all bespattered with blood
 of the just one.

35. *Christ Walks on the Sea*

In the midst of the sea the Lord walks, and while
 treading the waters⁵⁰
 He commands his disciple to leave the tottering vessel,
 But the man's mortal misgiving causes his footsteps to
 falter;⁵¹
 Christ by the hand now leads him and steadies the feet
 that are sinking.⁵² 140

36. *The Demon is Sent into the Swine*

In his sepulchral prison the savage demon had broken⁵³
 Fetters of iron that bound him; he darts forth and kneels
 before Jesus.
 But the Lord sets the man free and orders the devil
 to madden
 Herds of the swine and to plunge with them into the
 depths of the vast sea.

49 Cf. Matt. 14.6-11.

50 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 12.452.

51 Cf. Matt. 14.25-32.

52 Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.659.

53 Cf. Mark 5.1-13; Luke 8.27-33.

37. *The Five Loaves and Two Fishes*

God has broken five loaves and two fishes and fed the
 five thousand⁵⁴ 145
 With these viands that satisfy to the fullest their hunger.
 Then twice six baskets are filled with the fragments that
 are left over:
 Such is the bounty dispensed from the heavenly table
 forever.

38. *Lazarus is Raised from the Dead*

There is at Bethany a spot that witnessed a glorious
 miracle,⁵⁵
 When it saw thee, O Lazarus, return from the region
 of darkness. 150
 One may behold the burial place with its portals now
 broken,
 Whence your members returned from the grave with
 its ghastly corruption.

39. *The Field of Blood*

Sold for the price of a heinous crime, Haceldama's
 garden,⁵⁶
 Filled with graves, receives men's earthly remains for
 interment.
 This is the price of the blood of Christ. The miserable
 Judas 155
 Draws the halter about his neck to atone for his outrage.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Cf. Matt. 14.15-21.

⁵⁵ Cf. John 11.1-44.

⁵⁶ Cf. Matt. 27.7,8; Acts 1.19.

⁵⁷ Cf. Matt. 27.5; Acts 1.18.

40. *The House of Caiphas*

Lo, the house of the wicked blasphemer, Caiphas, has fallen,
 Where the sacred face of the Christ was cruelly smitten.⁵⁸
 This destruction will be the lot of all reprobate sinners,
 For their life will lie buried in crumbling ruins forever. 160

41. *The Pillar at Which Christ was Scourged*

In this house the Lord stood upright, bound and tied
 to a pillar,
 And submitted His back as a slave to the pitiless
 scourging.⁵⁹
 Worthy of reverence, this pillar still stands, supporting
 a temple,⁶⁰
 And instructing us how to lead our lives free from all
 scourges.

42. *The Passion of the Savior*

Water and blood flow forth from the transpierced sides
 of the Savior:⁶¹ 165
 Blood betokens the victory, water stands for baptism.
 Then the two robbers on crosses on each side dispute with
 each other:⁶²
 One denies Christ is God, the other wins heavenly glory.

58 Cf. Matt. 26.57-67; Mark 14.53-65.

59 Cf. Mark 15.15.

60 Cf. Jerome, *Epist.* 108.9.

61 Cf. John 19.34.

62 Cf. Luke 23.39-43.

43. *The Sepulcher of Christ*⁶³

Neither the stone nor the bolts of the tomb could hold
 Christ a captive;⁶⁴
 Death lies conquered by Him, He has trampled on hell's
 fiery chasm. 170
 With Him a throng of saints ascended to heavenly regions,
 And to many He showed Himself, letting them see Him
 and touch Him.

44. *The Mount of Olives*

From the Mountain of Olives Christ returned to the
 Father,⁶⁵
 And He left the footmarks of peace impressed on its
 summit.⁶⁶
 From the eternal branches there flows a copious liquor, 175
 Which attests that the earth has been washed by the gifts
 of the chrism.⁶⁷

45. *The Passion of Stephen*

Stephen is first to receive the crown for his blood
 shed as a martyr,⁶⁸
 Dashed to the earth by a rain of stones. But while he lies
 bleeding

⁶³ The authenticity of this quatrain has been questioned, since it does not appear in the manuscripts and first editions and was first printed by Geselinus and Fabricius in the sixteenth century.

⁶⁴ Cf. Matt. 27.52,53; 28.1-10; Luke 24.39,40; John 20.27; Acts 1.3.

⁶⁵ Cf. Acts 1.9.

⁶⁶ According to tradition a stone kept in an oratory built by St. Helena on the Mount of Olives bears the imprint of the foot of Christ.

⁶⁷ Baptism.

⁶⁸ Cf. Acts 7.57-59.

Under the cobbles, he prays to Christ not to charge his
 assailants
 With the stoning. How wondrous the love of that great
 protomartyr!

180

46. *The Beautiful Gate*

Standing still is the gate of the temple which men
 called Beautiful;⁶⁹
 Glorious work of Solomon it was, but at that portal
 Shone a more splendid work of Christ, for the voice of
 Peter
 Bade a lame man arise, who ran about leaping with
 wonder.

47. *The Vision of Peter*

Peter sees in a dream a vessel descending from heaven,⁷⁰ 185
 Filled with all kinds of animals: he refuses to eat them,
 But the Lord commands him to look on all things as
 wholesome.
 He arises and calls unclean tribes to the heavenly mysteries.

48. *The Vessel of Election*

He who was once a ravening wolf is now clothed as a
 soft lamb;⁷¹
 He who was Saul is changed into Paul when he loses his
 vision. 190
 Then he receives his sight once more and becomes an
 apostle,

⁶⁹ Cf. Acts 3.2-10.

⁷⁰ Cf. Acts 10.9-15; 34-46.

⁷¹ Cf. Acts 9.3-5; Gen. 49.27.

Teacher of Gentiles, with power of speech to change
crows into white doves.

49. *The Apocalypse of John*

Twenty-four elders here seated, resplendent with vessels
of incense,
Harps, and crowns of glory, the Lamb of God are
acclaiming,⁷²
Who was stained by the blood of His Passion and is
alone able
To examine the book and its seven seals break asunder.⁷³ 195

⁷² Cf. Apoc. 4.4; 5.8.

⁷³ Cf. Apoc. 5.1-6.

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

God, the Father, unto Thee
 The saintly man, pure, innocent, and faithful,
 Offers gifts of holy thoughts
 That in his blissful heart and spirit flourish.
 One deprives himself of wealth 5
 That he may from his store sustain the needy.
 Swift iambics I devote,
 To which I join the quick-revolving trochees,
 For I own no sanctity
 Nor gold to ease the pauper's want and misery. 10
 God, however, deigns to smile
 On my dull song and to it kindly harkens.
 Halls of rich men are adorned
 With vessels set in every nook and corner:¹
 Here the golden goblet shines, 15
 And there the splendid bowl of burnished copper;
 Here the jar of earthenware,
 And there the massive tray of lustrous silver,
 Many a vase of ivory
 And wooden platters carved from oak and elm. 20
 Every vessel is of worth
 That lends itself to service of the master,²
 For his house contains as well
 The costly urn and simple wooden trencher.
 In His Father's heavenly court 25
 Christ welcomes me, a crumbling, worn out vessel
 Meet for lowly offices,

¹ Cf. 2 Tim. 2.20; Tacitus, *Dial.* 22.4.

² Cf. 2 Tim. 2.21; Rom. 9.21.

And lets me stand in some secluded corner.

Lo, I am but earthenware

Within the royal palace of salvation, 30

Yet that I have given to God

The smallest service brings me boundless comfort.

Come what may, I will rejoice

That feeble lips of mine have sung Christ's praises, 35
[Christ, the ruler of my life.]³

³ Bergman brackets this line, which he regards as the addition of a copyist. The Hipponactean couplet used here by Prudentius consists of a shorter trochaic dimeter catalectic line followed by a longer iambic dimeter catalectic line. The poem would, therefore, normally end with the longer line.

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